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## EDITORIAL

In the first short article SEDOS Bulletin presents the nine point declaration by **Fr Ignatius Sandyawan Sumardi, SJ**, in which he explains clearly the humanitarian and religious reasons which led him to give shelter to some members of the Indonesian opposition. — It is followed by the paper **Sr Mary Motte, FMM**, gave at the SEDOS Seminar on 3 October, in Rome. In her reflection on modern age mission she stressed the importance of such basic attitudes as mutual “welcome” and sharing which help relationships to build up. — In his biblical contribution, **Fr Claude Tassin**, from the Institut Catholique de Paris, shows easily how much the notion of “witness” guided by the Spirit, is at the very heart of the Church’s missionary activity. — **Fr Laurenti Magesa**, a diocesan priest and well-known theologian from Tanzania, in his reflection “Christology, African Women and Minsitry” draws a parallel with the empirical experience of the women of Africa and brings attention to their need for a christology of Love, Justice and Mercy. — **Fr Felix Wilfred**, takes a critical look at the fashionable notion of ‘globalisation’. He insists in his article that ‘Christian Universality’ cannot and must not simply follow the pattern of globalisation. — **Serge Arnold** tells us in his short article of the efforts of many Humanitarian Organisations to help the tens of thousands of abandoned children and young people, left over from the racial conflicts in Rwanda and Burundi.

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# INDONÉSIE - ACCUSÉ D'AVOIR DONNÉ ASILE

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I. Sandyawan Sumardi, SJ

(NDLR. Avant son premier interrogatoire, le mardi 20 août, le P. Ignatius Sandyawan Sumardi, SJ, a donné une conférence de presse, dans laquelle il précise sa position en neuf points. Nous reproduisons ci-dessous l'intégralité de son intervention parue en indonésien dans *Hiddup*, revue catholique de Jakarta, le 1<sup>er</sup> septembre. Rappelons que le P. Sandyawan Sumardi est accusé d'avoir donné asile à des militants du PRD (petit parti accusé d'être à l'origine des émeutes du 27 juillet) recherchés par la police. Voir à ce sujet EDA 226. A la suite des émeutes de juillet, le P. Sumardi, en compagnie d'Abdurrahman Wahid, intellectuel musulman très connu, avait organisé l'aide aux victimes dans la ville de Jakarta. La traduction de l'indonésien est de la rédaction *d'Églises d'Asie*).

1. D'abord, je tiens à remercier profondément mes amis journalistes, tous ceux qui aiment la démocratie, et les dirigeants de notre pays, pour cette occasion qui m'est donnée de clarifier ma position.

2. Ces derniers temps, je suis resté sans voix. Les événements sanglants du 27 juillet dernier sont difficiles à "digérer". J'ai besoin de temps pour faire "retraite" (et non pour disparaître, je n'ai aucune faculté pour cela). Il est vrai que depuis qu'un quotidien de la capitale a parlé de moi dans un article plein de sous-entendus, mes amis et moi-même sommes en butte à des provocations et des menaces: menaces physiques (à de nombreuses reprises, nous avons reçu la visite d'inconnus, une fois jusqu'à quinze hommes venus en camion; on nous a montré de manière brutale un mandat d'arrêt, en violation de la loi car ne venant ni de la police ni du parquet); ou menaces téléphoniques de mettre le feu à nos maisons et à nos bureaux. Mais il n'est nul besoin de répondre à la violence par la violence. Celle-ci blesse le coeur de l'homme, qu'il en soit l'auteur ou la victime. La violence ne peut que blesser le coeur de Dieu, le Très Bon.

3. Je suis si las et si triste, en raison de cette violence qui n'en finit pas et ne cesse de faire des victimes. Comme religieux, je ne peux que me plonger dans la prière, m'en remettre à Dieu, le Miséricordieux.

4. Je demande à ce que soit regardé en toute honnêteté le travail social humanitaire de l'équipe des volontaires qui sont venus en aide aux victimes des événements du 27 juillet 1996, ainsi que l'Institut social de Jakarta (ISJ). Nous avons travaillé avec des amis au coeur droit et de bonne volonté, ouvertement, en toute légalité et en collaboration avec d'autres tout en gardant notre indépendance,

mais toujours en nous appuyant sur la constitution de 1945 et le *Pancasila*. Nous nous sommes faits proches des victimes et nous nous sommes adressé à elles, quelles qu'elles soient, surtout les pauvres et les petits, dans la lumière éclatante de l'amour de Dieu.

Pleinement confiant dans l'amour de Dieu comme puissance de vie et de résurrection, l'ISJ s'est donné pour but d'être un asile pour les enfants pauvres des villes, les gamins des rues et les familles des bidonvilles, et de les aider à devenir autonomes. De même, pour les adultes les plus défavorisés des villes, notre objectif reste simple: leur assurer un service élémentaire en matière de santé et les aider à devenir autonomes sur le plan socio-économique; fournir une aide juridique aux travailleurs les plus défavorisés, qui sont victimes de licenciement ou en conflit avec leurs employeurs. Nous avons déjà l'habitude d'aides humanitaires de ce genre: premiers secours lorsque survient une catastrophe, comme les inondations de Ciliwung, l'évacuation forcée ou l'incendie de bidonvilles; dresser des postes de première urgence lorsqu'une épidémie menace les bidonvilles. Pour que ce travail social puisse répondre aux besoins des pauvres et aboutisse à terme à une transformation, nous faisons des enquêtes, des analyses, et nous efforçons de proposer au gouvernement des mesures alternatives. Assez souvent, nous devons nous faire les porte-parole des familles pauvres et faire le lien entre elles et le gouvernement.

En dernier lieu, nous nous sommes joint à l'équipe des volontaires (qui, le 16 août dernier, a été reconnue officiellement et approuvée comme organisme affilié à la Commission nationale des droits de l'homme, spécialement pour les événements du 27 juillet 1996). C'est un projet

social et humanitaire très éloigné de motivations politiques et religieuses.

5. Quant à la rumeur sur mon engagement dans le PRD (*Partai Rakyat Demokratik*), colportée en particulier par un quotidien de Jakarta (13/08/96) qui a laissé entendre que j'étais la tête pensante de ce parti, je tiens à mettre les choses au point.

Premièrement, le 27 juillet 1996, je n'étais pas à Jakarta, puisque j'assistais à une ordination de nouveaux prêtres.

Deuxièmement, dans le cadre du travail humanitaire accompli par l'équipe de volontaires, notre attention va en tout premier lieu aux victimes. Dès notre première réunion, nous avons envisagé le fait qu'il puisse y avoir deux sortes de victimes: celles au moment des événements, et celles après les événements (celles qui font l'objet de poursuites, ou qui ont à craindre les tirs à vue ou les tortures).

Troisièmement, la chronologie des événements: le vendredi 2 août 1996, Iwan, se présentant sous le nom de Yakup, que je ne connaissais pas auparavant, me demande au téléphone de l'aider et de venir le chercher. Lorsque j'arrive au rendez-vous, Iwan était avec deux copains, ceux-ci se faisant appeler Eko et Hari (j'apprendrai par la suite qu'il s'agit de Budiman et de Haryanto). Pour être franc, j'ai hésité à ce moment-là. Mais, pour des raisons humanitaires, en tant que religieux, j'ai spontanément procuré un asile provisoire à ces jeunes: ils avaient très peur de se faire tirer dessus, et d'être torturés s'ils étaient arrêtés. Je les ai emmenés aussitôt à Bekasi, où je les ai confiés momentanément à mon frère Benny Sumardi, qui ignorait absolument tout de leur problème. Une semaine plus tard, ils étaient arrêtés dans la maison de mon frère, qui fut arrêté et emmené lui aussi. Pourquoi avoir attendu une semaine? Parce que, durant tout ce temps, j'ai consacré mon attention et mon énergie aux victimes des événements du 27 juillet (les blessés, ceux qui ont été détenus au poste de police, les disparus et les morts) plutôt qu'à Budiman et ses amis, qui se sentaient poursuivis par la police et menacés, et que nous avions classés dans la catégorie des victimes d'après les événements.

6. Je regrette très profondément toute cette tragédie, d'autant plus qu'elle a fait de nombreuses victimes, sans qu'il y ait eu forcément faute de leur part, y compris mon frère Benny Sumardi et sa famille (une famille simple, vivant du travail du bois et qui, jusqu'à présent, a toujours soutenu notre travail humanitaire, allant jusqu'à vouloir adopter un enfant

des bidonvilles, bien qu'ils aient eux-mêmes des enfants). Mais je suis prêt à assumer toute la responsabilité, avec les conséquences légales qui s'en suivent, de la décision que j'ai prise personnellement d'accorder protection aux trois jeunes gens qui sont maintenant sur le banc des accusés. N'est-ce pas là une façon de mettre en oeuvre le commandement de Dieu le Miséricordieux: protéger toute victime, quelle que soit son origine, sa race, sa religion ou ses convictions personnelles; protéger ceux qui sont en danger d'être abattus ou torturés? D'autant plus qu'il n'est pas prouvé que ces jeunes soient coupables de mauvaises actions. Avant de prendre ma décision, j'en ai parlé avec plusieurs responsables religieux, pour qui j'ai une très grande estime.

7. A ceux qui, faisant preuve d'irresponsabilité, veulent de plus en plus déplacer le problème sur le terrain politique (désintégration nationale), religieux ou ethnique, je ferai remarquer ceci: dans le groupe PDI (parti d'opposition, voir EDA 226) de Suryadi, nombreux sont ceux qui font partie des élites catholiques; de même que, dans le groupe de Megawati (opposé à celui de Suryadi, ndlr), il y a beaucoup de catholiques très simples. A mon avis, cela n'a pas beaucoup d'importance. Mais dès avant les événements, j'avais peur que ne se réalise ce proverbe: quand les éléphants se battent ou copulent, finalement, c'est toujours l'herbe qui est écrasée. C'est bien ce qui est arrivé: la violence organisée vise de plus en plus les petites gens, les réfugiés, les victimes.

8. Pour terminer, je m'adresse humblement à tous, principalement à nos dirigeants: suivons honnêtement la voix de notre conscience, revenons aux normes de développement de notre peuple: la méditation, et l'amour des victimes sur notre terre. Car leur souffle, notre souffle prend sa source en Dieu même.

9. Si c'est là la conséquence de ma foi, vécue concrètement, en une humanité juste et civilisée, et si, maintenant, cela signifie que l'on doive me jeter sur le tas des victimes, alors je suis prêt. Je me sens faible, il est vrai; mais je ne veux pas me soumettre à la peur. Que l'amour de Dieu qui nous pardonne tous devienne la conscience de notre peuple. Libre.

Ref. *Églises d'Asie* No. 227, 16 septembre 1996

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# RE-IMAGING MISSION: A FEMININE PERSPECTIVE

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Sr Mary Motte, FMM

*The conference was given at the SEDOS Seminar on 3 October 1996, in Rome.*

## 1. Introduction

The development of mission in the Latin Church from the 16th to the 20th centuries was mainly defined by men within the world context of colonialism. These structures were predominantly masculine, lacking for the most part a mutuality of the feminine. Women certainly participated in the mission of the Church, but generally under the direction of men. They did not directly participate in shaping structures of mission. Of course, there were exceptional influences. Some women certainly provided insights and ways of being within the structures that resulted in some significant contributions. Other women, in quiet and hidden participation, brought about a limited transformation within the context of their times. However, my point here is that the structures in themselves were masculine; they lacked completion from the feminine perspective. One could perhaps say these structures were lopsided. The same would have been true had history been dominated by women without the integrated insight of the masculine element.

In the wake of colonialism's demise the traditional structures of mission began to falter. The end of the colonial era brought about a loss of confidence in the structures associated with that period. The Second Vatican Council searched for a self-understanding of the Church and its mission in light of both what was happening in the world and what had happened in its history. Here insights were uncovered that began to change mission structures, introducing a feminine element through Divine Inspiration. The Council situated the basis of mission in the Mystery of the Trinity (cf. *Ad Gentes*, n. 2, *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 1). Baptism was recognised as the foundational sacrament for missionary participation, beginning from the local Church, situated in the context of today's world (cf. *Ad Gentes*, nn. 35-36; *Redemptoris Missio*, nn. 2, 77; *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 1). This new space of mission provided a different way for participation in communicating the Gospel Message. The way

opened for voices from the periphery to be heard, in different languages and expressions.

The voices from the Council were the voices of men. I do not think they would have claimed responsibility for a shift from masculine to masculine/ feminine structures in mission, nor for having opened the way for that shift to happen. However, I do believe as I reflect on the evolution of mission, that the seeds for a feminisation of mission were sown during the Council. The mystery of God creatively at work began a process; one still on the way, but now we can perceive something new emerging.

## 2. Elements of the Feminine

The mystery of God remains a mystery. We cannot fully grasp how the masculine and feminine interact in that mystery; but we know they are present since we are made in God's image. Therefore, I do not wish to attribute the feminine only to the Spirit, since there are a complexity of issues involved which cannot be elaborated in this text (cf. Johnson, Elizabeth A., 1996, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, New York: Crossroad, pp.50-52). My purpose is simply to draw attention to how the Spirit's action opens us to new ways of seeing. In the case of the evolution of mission, insight about the Spirit's presence has enabled a new space for mission to emerge, and this space includes room for the feminine.

There is increasing awareness of the Holy Spirit's active presence in the world. This has profound implications for our understanding of mission. The very mystery of God's Spirit continually acting in the world to bring about the salvation of all peoples requires a profound attentiveness to all whom we encounter. God's Spirit is the principal agent of mission (cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 21), present outside the Church (cf. *Ad Gentes*, nn. 3, 1, 5;

*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 10; *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 28). The image of the Apostles preaching and proclaiming the Message, although essential to the realisation of mission, is not the first image from the Gospel that enables us for a new way of acting. Early in the Gospel stories, we encounter two women, each of whom conceives a child: Elizabeth and Mary. Luke tells us that Elizabeth, after conceiving, kept to herself for five months, saying, *The Lord has done this for me, now that it has pleased him to take away the humiliation I suffered in public* (cf. Lk 1:25). Mary hears the angel answer her question concerning the seeming impossibility of participating in the plan God has proposed:

*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called the Son of God. And I tell you this too: your cousin Elizabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a son, and she who people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible with God* (cf. Lk 1:35-37).

The story goes on, and Luke tells us about the meeting between Mary and Elizabeth. With all the distance of time and culture, a note of excitement still escapes from the text, and I can hear a powerful emotion in Elizabeth's words, *Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled* (cf. Lk 1:45).

Have you ever wondered why God sets this important moment in salvation history before us in this way? Is there a message here for us as we try to understand the significance of the Spirit as the principal agent of mission? Do we need to ponder more deeply the images of life growing in the womb, a woman attentive to that life, the waiting, the silence, the beginning of a relationship to a life, and the awareness that all life is from God, revealing something to us of God's mystery and interaction with us? What does mission look like when rooted in these images so strongly associated with the feminine? Why does God communicate the message of salvation by entering history through a woman?

Two texts from *Redemptoris Missio* invite us to explore new ways of thinking about mission. One of these describes pluralism as *the fruit of the dynamism communicated by the Spirit ... which invites us to be attentive to different situations* (cf. n. 23). The other reminds us that *all forms of the Spirit's presence are to be welcomed* (cf. n. 29). The opening of the structures of mission to the feminine provides greater space for attentiveness and welcoming, participation, relationships and communion.

Mission is communicating the Gospel Message. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* indicates mission is a process, composed of many elements. Here again, we have another way of looking at mission. As a process, this communication begins with a human, cultural situation where the action of the Spirit is already present (nn. 20, 29; also cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 29), and this implies that there are a variety of ways in which the Gospel is communicated (cf. *Evangelii nuntiandi*, nn. 17, 24). A foundational mission methodology emerges from these texts. Each encounter between the Gospel Message and a human, cultural situation requires a discernment of how to communicate the Message (cf. *ibid.*, n. 29; *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 32). Such an encounter implies relationship, and we have to ask what is the ground of this relationship. There are, of course, the many concrete implications such as study of language and culture, already long established in missionary praxis. However, just relations are always the starting point. There have been times in mission when this has been overlooked. The Synod of Bishops, 30 November 1971, unequivocally stated the constitutive relationship between just human relations and evangelization (*Justice in the World* n. 6). Since then we have deepened our understanding of the process of communicating the Gospel. Respect for life in every person, non-violence in relationships and the promotion of life in all creation are integral to the way we live out mission (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 78; *Redemptoris Missio*, nn. 39, 58-59; *Evangelium Vitae*, nn. 29-30, 81-83, 99 and *passim*).

Awareness of the Spirit's action in the world and recognising communication of the Message as a process, has led to understanding evangelization as a continuing dialogue with the action of the Holy Spirit, present in every person and human group. Our purpose as missionaries is to engage as members of the ecclesial community in the collaboration with God's action to bring about the Kingdom. This phenomenal purpose, however, does not remove us from the human situation. We carry out this collaboration in the midst of the world; that is the intention of God's taking on humanness in the cloth of Mary's flesh. So, culture and history are the framework for our understanding the Gospel, the way we conceptualise God's intention and action. *The unfathomable mystery of God is always mediated through shifting historical discourse* (cf. Johnson, Elizabeth A., 1996, *op. cit.*, p. 6). However, culture and history are always limited, and therefore we need constantly to move beyond the boundaries of their limitations (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 20; *Redemptoris Missio*, nn. 28-29).



These limitations can only be transcended by a communion created through relationships that mediate the Divine and the human in a search for unity in the midst of diversity. As we enter into communion with Churches throughout the world, and with the Church's continuous life in history we discover a possibility of moving beyond the boundaries of limited insight and understanding (cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, nn. 2, 85). This requires a continuing proclamation of the Gospel through intercultural communication. All the partners in such a conversation are both hearers and speakers. This intercultural communication is a continuous and active conversation; it is the means by which both speakers and hearers seek meaning in a given cultural context. The meaning achieved is never closed, but must always be deepened by encounter with new insights and new realities in a framework of evolving cultures (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 20, *Redemptoris Missio*, nn. 32, 37 b, c). Inculturation, the incarnating of the Gospel Message in a given cultural situation, is a way of engaging in intercultural communication (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, nn. 15, 75; *Redemptoris Missio*, nn. 52, 53). The larger framework of the latter, provides a way for any inculturation to avoid becoming a closed and stagnant realisation.

### 3. An Emerging Challenge

Twenty-five years after *Ad Gentes*, John Paul II recalled the Council's efforts *to renew the Church's life and activity in the light of the needs of the contemporary world* (cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 1). He points out that the missionary decree dynamically based the Church's missionary nature *on the Trinitarian mission itself* (cf. *ibid.*, n. 1):

*The missionary thrust therefore belongs to the very nature of the Christian life, and is also the inspiration behind ecumenism: 'that they may all be one ... so that the world may believe that you have sent me' (Jn 17:21).*

The mystery of the Trinity glimpses God in mutual relationship, realising communion. All are invited to enter this mystery through Jesus Christ. It is an invitation to a communion which has no boundaries or frontiers; a communion which is universal, because relationship in God is beyond all boundaries, and because all are invited to participate (cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 31). Missionary activity at the service of God's Reign is to collaborate in enabling all persons to enter into this communion.

This continues the Son's mission in the mission of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, n. 1). The *Kingdom aims at transforming human relationships; it grows gradually as people slowly learn to love, forgive and serve one another*. Through concrete expressions of sharing and collaboration among local Churches the ecclesial community realises that communion which constitutes the universality of the Church in its service of the Kingdom whose nature is *one of communion among all human beings — with one another and with God* (cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 15).

Today, the Church as sign and sacrament of that communion lived in the mystery of God, finds continually new expression through the emergence of local Churches throughout the world. This increasing

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***Within a framework constituted by welcome, relationships are built up in respect for the integrity of each person. Insertion among a people means entering into their condition, seeing the world from where they stand, and walking with them.***

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reality in the post-conciliar period has *led to a lively exchange of spiritual benefits and gifts* (cf. *ibid.*, n. 2). Such a context, so remarkably different from that of the earlier missionary period, requires a re-situation of mission sending and receiving — two important aspects of mission.

Both sending and receiving in mission are important in all expressions of mission. However, they take on a critical importance in relation to communion among Churches. Sending and receiving in mission are among the ways in which this communion among local Churches can be realised. Persons sent to become part of other local Churches bring a perspective on the Gospel which can be an important part of ongoing intercultural dialogue that prevents a local Church from being closed in on itself. Both sending and receiving need to be studied more deeply in the light of this idea of intercultural conversation and the communion of Churches. Often sending remains somewhat tied to older conceptions and structures. Receiving has not been explored sufficiently, at times scarcely thought about in some of the local Churches that have not had this experience in the past. Even where receiving has

been part of past experience, it needs to be situated in a new context, namely one of mutuality, intercultural conversation, and communion. We need to delve into the meaning of an *effective sense of the universality of the Faith* dynamically present through *giving and receiving personnel* among local Churches which are *rooted in their own people and culture* (cf. *ibid.*, n. 85).

#### 4. A New Motivation For Mission

In the last few years multi-cultural reality has increased intensively and with astounding rapidity throughout the world. We are aware of various crisis situations that have resulted in mass movements of peoples; there have also been the immigrations of peoples from one part of the world to another for a variety of other reasons. Many religious congregations have become more acutely aware of their own internationality or lack of it. For those where internationality has been part of their beginnings, there is recognition that this reality must be reread in the light of these new times. For those where internationality is a more recent aspect or new possibility in their membership, there are a number of questions related to mutuality, styles and structures.

For some years now missionary congregations have worked through an existential realisation of an *option for the poor*. This has moved beyond the option itself, to a way of walking with, accompaniment of, and solidarity with the poor. Structures of mission have profoundly shifted on this journey. A new vulnerability emerges in which the missionary is one who enters the process of communicating the Gospel as a *victim* (Bosch uses the term *victim* to describe an alternate way of entering into communication as a bearer of the Gospel Message), in fragility and weakness, rather than in power (Bosch, David. 1994, "The Vulnerability of Mission" in *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 2: Theological Foundations*, pp. 73-86 James Scherer, Stephen Bevans, eds. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books).

Human relationships within society are fostered through the missionary's solidarity. With the people in whom God is present, the journey moves toward a realisation of human community where justice, peace and harmony in creation are valued and promoted. Communion grows out of this experience woven between the now and not yet of God's Reign.

Within a framework constituted by *welcome*, relationships are built up in respect for the integrity of

each person. Insertion among a people means entering into their condition, seeing the world from where they stand, and walking with them. It implies waiting to be welcomed, listening, holding all that is heard in one's heart, and marvelling at the wonders God is working. It means suffering with rather than exercising power and force to remove the suffering; it means journeying with the people through dark valleys, toward liberation. Insertion involves presence to the other; and it involves an ongoing conversation that both listens and speaks. Through this presence and conversation, it is a proclamation of Good News. It means fidelity to a people, even to the ultimate sacrifice when that is asked.

Such a way of mission implies structures of both sending and receiving in all local Churches. Missionary institutes and lay mission groups need to find how they can participate; perhaps there is a task of collaboration to be explored together with local Churches in order to begin to develop these structures. A primary consideration for all involved is the role of the person sent; it cannot be seen first of all as a response to some need. Responding to needs is important and most who are sent, if not all, will be called to do some specific ministry. But if communion is the purpose of sending and receiving, then the one sent must be seen first of all as one who comes with an experience of living the Gospel, invited as a partner in conversation with members of the local Church in a dialogue of life. The Good News of the Gospel will emerge always more fully from these conversations, and will be a means of carrying the Gospel Message beyond the local Church to those who have not heard the Message.

#### 5. Conclusion

In closing, I want to share a story with you, an event in my own life that I realise now has been re-shaping or re-imaging my understanding of mission in a concrete way. Some years ago I spent some time in a small village in the mountains of Lebanon. One of my tasks was to go each day to get the drinking water for the community. It took me about twenty minutes to walk, along a dry, dusty path. At the end of the path there was a small clearing in front of a walled-in residence. There a small pipe came out of the ground, and each day, between 9:30 and 10:30 in the morning, the water was turned on so the few of us who lived in the area could have our drinking water. The others who waited with me were Muslim women, some young and some older. In all we were about five women. We had no common language, I spoke no Arabic and they spoke no French. Yet each



morning as I came into the open space with my two empty buckets, they welcomed me, inviting me to sit on the ground with them and wait. The eldest undertook to teach me Arabic, and each morning, I learned some new words, and the next day, I was tested. This is how we waited for the water, enjoying one another's company. They encouraged my efforts to get the right sounds, and to match words with objects. Then, after many days of waiting for water together, the time approached for me to leave, and return to Beirut. Just before I was to leave, the women sent a message to our community, inviting me to come to learn how they made bread. Two of us went down to their compound the next morning, aware that this invitation was indeed a privilege. They were radiant with welcomes, and excited with this venture of teaching me how to make their bread. Each step of the way they explained; and although the words were beyond my grasp, their gestures told all. It was a wonderful moment, and like such moments, it passed very quickly. Just before we left, my friends and teachers presented us with a stack of bread to bring to our house.

I recognised this experience, even then, early in my missionary life, as special, but I did not fully understand its significance or the impact it would have on my understanding of mission. Over the years this image has remained vivid, and gradually it has been a key in transforming my perception of the meaning and motivation for mission today. These women had no illusions about who I was and who they were. I was a Franciscan sister from the United States, they were Muslim women from Lebanon, and they welcomed me into their space. We shared no common language, but their word of welcome — *come and sit among us, be with us while we wait*, was a word that became event. They invited me into their language, and taught me their words as we waited for that important, life-giving element of water. And finally, they shared bread. And thus I was invited to enter another space, discovering God in a different way. It had nothing to do with anything I said or brought with me, it had nothing to do with studies or diplomas; it had everything to do with my being there and being welcomed by these Muslim women. The Holy Spirit acting in these women, gently drew me to realise mission is rooted in relationships. This is the basis for human community and eventually, communion.

The new structures of mission gradually emerging in the Church since the Second Vatican Council are permeated with the feminine. Can this more complete image of mission realised through participation, in relationships and communion imbue

the entire ecclesial community with a vision and a passion?

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not mention the feminist movement, at least at the close of this presentation. I believe this is a determining factor in our contemporary context, one we are called to embrace. I did not focus on it because I wanted to explore some of the ways the Mystery of God created openings in missionary understanding through the Second Vatican Council, openings that bring the feminine to bear on mission structures. This process is still not completed; women are still excluded in a number of ways. Both women and men need to be acutely conscious of the continuing marginalisation of women in history, Church and society, both need to enter a commitment to transform this limiting of God's presence in our history. Together we need to discover in concrete experiences of women today, why God entered human history through a woman. Through this collaboration in proclaiming Good News about God's Mystery incarnated in human history, I believe we can hope for a new vision and motivation for mission.

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# VOUS SEREZ MES TÉMOINS

## LE MESSAGE DES ACTES DES APOTRES

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Claude Tassin  
Institut catholique, Paris

La notion de témoignage est au cœur de l'activité missionnaire de l'Église, et le livre des Actes reste un lieu privilégié de ressourcement en ce domaine. Dès Ac 1, 8, retentit cet ordre: "*Vous serez mes témoins*". Replacé dans son contexte, ce verset permet déjà de cadrer la situation des témoins du Christ (I). Les grandes figures évoquées au long du livre — les apôtres, Étienne, Paul — précisent les traits du témoignage (II). Enfin, nul n'a insisté autant que Luc sur le rôle de l'Esprit Saint dans le témoignage (III).

### I. TÉMOIGNER DU CHRIST: UN PROGRAMME

D'emblée, le Ressuscité présente le témoignage comme le programme que les apôtres devront remplir:

*Vous recevrez une puissance, celle du Saint Esprit qui viendra sur vous, et vous serez mes témoins à Jérusalem, dans toute la Judée et la Samarie, et jusqu'à l'extrémité de la terre (Ac 1,8).*

Les mentions géographiques de ce verset tracent l'itinéraire du livre des Actes. C'est par Paul arrivant à Rome que l'Évangile atteindra l'extrémité de la terre. Néanmoins, Luc considère les apôtres comme les témoins privilégiés. Car, pour lui, le témoignage signifie d'abord une continuité entre le ministère terrestre de Jésus et la mission de l'Église. Il souligne ce fait en imbriquant la fin de son évangile et le début des Actes: même envoi des témoins à qui est promis l'Esprit (cf. Lc 24, 48-50), même évocation de l'Ascension (Lc 24, 50-53).

Les mentions géographiques se trouvent prises en tenailles par une formule biblique: "*Vous serez mes témoins... jusqu'à l'extrémité de la terre*". C'est une allusion au prophète, Serviteur de Dieu, qui doit être "... lumière des nations" (Is 42, 6) "*jusqu'à l'extrémité de la terre*" (Is 49, 6). Or, au I<sup>er</sup> siècle, c'est la mission de tout Israël que les Juifs voyaient dans ce Serviteur. Dans le même livre d'Israël, le

mot "*témoin*" désigne aussi la mission d'Israël (cf. Is 43, 10. 12; 44, 8). Il s'agissait d'une mission passive: par sa libération de l'exil et par sa fidélité à la Loi de Dieu (cf. Sg 18, 4), le Peuple élu constituait aux yeux des nations une preuve vivante de la puissance de Dieu. A présent, les envoyés du Christ rendront un témoignage actif: ils iront vers les autres, Juifs et païens.

La référence à la figure du Serviteur rappelle que la mission de témoignage incombait au Peuple de Dieu tout entier. Si des témoins se détachent maintenant, c'est qu'une partie d'Israël s'est fermée à la parole de Jésus et a ainsi failli à sa mission de lumière du monde. Ce refus se dessine avec netteté quand Paul et Barnabé se tournent résolument vers les païens pour accomplir la prophétie du Serviteur:

*Je t'ai établi lumière des nations, pour que tu sois salut jusqu'à l'extrémité de la terre (Ac 13, 47 = Is 49, 6).*

Mais, au sein de l'Église aussi, des tensions existent entre les initiatives de témoins ouverts aux événements et la communauté plus lente à saisir les voies de Dieu (cf., par exemple, Ac 11, 2-3). La mise en scène de l'Assemblée de Jérusalem (Ac 15, 1-21) suggère même qu'un tel écartèlement est la loi du témoignage.

Le Serviteur du livre d'Isaïe est une figure du prophétique, et les témoins sont avant tout des prophètes. Ici encore, Luc accentue la continuité entre le Christ et ses envoyés. Durant son ministère terrestre, Jésus seul était animé par l'Esprit prophétique descendu sur lui lors de son baptême. A partir de la Pentecôte, les témoins recevront cet Esprit (cf. Ac 2, 18). En outre, l'auteur n'hésitera pas à appliquer au Christ et à Paul, son témoin, les mêmes allusions au Serviteur (Is 42, 6-7): Paul est envoyé aux nations "*pour leur ouvrir les yeux, les détourner des ténèbres vers la lumière*" (Ac 26, 18) et Jésus ressuscité "*doit annoncer la lumière au Peuple et aux nations*" (26, 23).

## II. LES TÉMOINS

### Les Apôtres et la communauté de Jérusalem

Pour Luc, seuls les Onze sont des apôtres, car sa conception de l'apostolat exige que ceux-ci aient été témoins de la vie terrestre de Jésus "depuis le commencement", c'est-à-dire depuis son baptême. L'élection de Matthias, le douzième, traduit bien ce point de vue (cf. Ac 1, 21-22; comparer 10, 37-43 et Lc 1, 2). Les Douze sont donc les témoins par excellence dans l'Église de Jérusalem, mais leur témoignage fait corps avec celui de l'ensemble des croyants.

En effet, l'événement de la Pentecôte débouche sur le baptême qui lui-même vise le don de l'Esprit Saint (Ac 2, 38; cf. 10, 44-48). La communauté des baptisés forme ainsi un peuple de prophètes (cf. 2, 18). La prophétie consiste d'abord en une expérience de lucidité spirituelle. Les chrétiens découvrent Dieu et son Christ à l'œuvre dans l'unité signifiée par "*la fraction du pain*" (2, 42) et par une communion grâce à laquelle "*parmi eux nul n'était dans le besoin*" (4, 34).

Dans la prière, dont il est à la fois l'origine et le terme, l'Esprit donne aux croyants de saisir les événements tels que Dieu les voit. Ce trait s'affirme nettement dans la scène qui suit la délivrance des apôtres (Ac 4, 23-31). La prière, suscitée par l'Esprit, permet de construire ensemble un discernement, de trouver un sens à la persécution qui frappe les disciples du Christ. Au terme, "*tous furent remplis du Saint Esprit et se mirent à annoncer la parole de Dieu avec assurance*" (4, 31). Cette prière prophétique explique que le premier témoignage consiste, au jour de la Pentecôte, à "*publier les merveilles de Dieu*" (2, 11). On saisit aussi pourquoi, selon Lc 11, 13, ce que le Père peut donner de meilleur à ceux qui prient, c'est l'Esprit Saint (comparer avec Mt 7, 11).

Quant au témoignage des apôtres eux-mêmes, trois traits parmi d'autres méritent l'attention:

1. Les témoins apparaissent partout où la Parole peut rencontrer les hommes, "*chaque jour, au Temple et dans les maisons*" (Ac 5, 42). Ce qui ne va pas sans tiraillements. Étienne contestera le lien trop affirmé de certains chrétiens avec le Temple; on reprochera à Pierre d'avoir logé chez Corneille, un païen.

Les Actes racontent maintes comparutions devant le tribunal. En de telles circonstances, les apôtres ont

expérimenté la force de l'Esprit promis par le Christ (cf. Lc 12, 12). Surtout, en relisant l'histoire, Luc découvre que le tribunal est moins une épreuve pénible qu'une chance providentielle de donner à l'Évangile toute la publicité qu'il mérite: "*Cela vous donnera une occasion de témoignage*" (Lc 21, 13).

2. Les témoins annoncent le Christ dans le langage de leurs interlocuteurs. En d'autres termes, ce sont les destinataires de la Bonne Nouvelle qui façonnent en partie le message des témoins. A Jérusalem, les discours de Pierre s'adressent aux Juifs. L'Apôtre recourt donc à l'Ancien Testament selon des techniques de commentaire en usage dans les synagogues. En revanche, chez Corneille, un païen, les références à l'Écriture s'estompent, tandis qu'apparaissent de nouveaux traits du Christ, plus universalistes: il est "*le Seigneur de tous, juge des vivants et des morts*" (Ac 10, 36.42).

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**Dans les Actes, "l'Esprit apparaît comme l'inspirateur de la Parole, l'animateur de la vie interne de l'Église, le guide de la mission".**

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Mais, en même temps, les témoins partent de leur expérience et de l'irrépressible besoin d'en rendre compte. Car elle concerne l'avenir de tous: "*Nous ne pouvons pas, quant à nous, ne pas publier ce que nous avons vu et entendu*" (4, 20). Ils annoncent le Christ ressuscité parce qu'eux-mêmes éprouvent sa puissance lorsqu'ils reçoivent son Esprit ou opèrent une guérison par son Nom (3, 7). D'ailleurs, le témoin ne peut vérifier le message de vie qu'il porte que si d'autres humains accèdent à la même expérience que lui.

3. Voilà bien pourquoi les témoins s'impliquent eux-mêmes. Une gradation tragique marque leur témoignage. Les apôtres sont d'abord interdits de parole (4, 18), puis menacés de mort (5, 33), et battus de verges (5, 41). Bientôt Étienne ira jusqu'à la mort (7, 57-60). Luc conclut ainsi l'histoire des apôtres à Jérusalem:

*Ils s'en allèrent du Sanhédrin, tout joyeux d'avoir été jugés (par Dieu!) dignes de subir des outrages pour le Nom (Ac 5, 41).*

Cette réflexion rejoint une expérience qui traverse nombre d'écrits du Nouveau Testament, depuis la béatitude des témoins, persécutés comme les prophètes (Mt 5, 11-12), jusqu'à l'émotion de Paul s'adressant aux Thessaloniciens: "*Vous vous êtes mis à nous imiter, nous [les apôtres] et le Seigneur, en*

*accueillant la parole, parmi bien des épreuves, avec la joie de l'Esprit Saint*" (1 Th 1, 6; cf. 1 Th 2, 14-15). La joie des témoins maltraités traduit leur foi: puisque la persécution nous identifie à la passion du Christ, alors viendra aussi la résurrection avec lui. L'assurance de "*gens sans instruction ni culture*" (Ac 4, 13) suscite l'étonnement, premier effet du témoignage. Elle dispose aussi le martyr au pardon (cf. Ac 7, 60). Car le refus du pardon signifierait que le témoin ne s'identifie pas encore complètement au Crucifié qui n'a compté que sur Dieu pour lui rendre justice.

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**Étienne paie de sa vie ce témoignage qui donne de l'histoire du salut une autre vision que celle des apôtres. Pour la première fois, le mot "témoin" peut se traduire par "martyr" (cf. 22, 20). Le fruit de ce martyr est riche.**

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## Étienne

L'histoire d'Étienne (Ac 6-7) abonde en sous-entendus. Avec l'apparition des "*Hellénistes*" (6, 1), un nouveau milieu chrétien se profile, celui de Juifs de langue et de culture grecques, moins liés à certaines institutions juives que ne le sont les "*Hébreux*", judéo-chrétiens de Palestine. Luc signale qu'une "*multitude de prêtres*" sont devenus chrétiens (6, 7). L'Église pourrait donc devenir un judaïsme réformé, vivant à l'ombre du Temple. Les Hellénistes ne l'entendent pas ainsi. Étienne, leur chef de file, estime plutôt que Jésus a prononcé une condamnation du culte juif. En d'autres termes, point n'est besoin d'être un fidèle du Temple pour devenir un disciple du Christ. Ce débat, commencé dans les synagogues de langue grecque (6, 8-13) conduit Étienne à comparaître devant le Sanhédrin.

Son discours (7, 2-53), véritable manifeste des chrétiens hellénistes, se résumerait ainsi: les hauts faits de Dieu dans l'histoire n'ont pas pour cadre la Terre sainte. Le culte d'Israël est vicié à sa base par l'affaire du veau d'or au désert, et Dieu n'a pas demandé qu'on lui bâtisse un Temple. Que Jérusalem refuse l'Évangile se comprend, puisqu'une partie d'Israël, déjà opposée à Moïse, est toujours restée sourde aux appels de Dieu.

Étienne paie de sa vie ce témoignage qui donne de l'histoire du salut une autre vision que celle des

apôtres. Pour la première fois, le mot "*témoin*" peut se traduire par "*martyr*" (cf. 22, 20). Le fruit de ce martyr est riche. Les Hellénistes du groupe d'Étienne convertiront les Samaritains (8, 4-13), eux qui contestent la légitimité du Sanctuaire de Jérusalem (cf. Jn 4, 20). Les mêmes Hellénistes fonderont l'Église d'Antioche qui, pour la première fois, intègre des non-Juifs (Ac 11, 19-21).

Une telle moisson a levé pour deux raisons complémentaires: d'une part, les Hellénistes ont dû, providentiellement, fuir Jérusalem à cause des idées subversives de leur chef de file, tandis que les apôtres, étrangers à ces idées, n'ont pas été inquiétés (cf. 8, 1); d'autre part, les apôtres n'avaient pas les atouts culturels des Hellénistes pour faire entendre l'Évangile aux Samaritains et aux païens.

Bref, l'histoire d'Étienne marque un tournant dans l'histoire du témoignage: on ne peut être témoin sans un minimum de connivence culturelle avec ceux à qui l'on s'adresse. Les Hellénistes, et non les Douze, avaient cette connivence avec les Samaritains et les Grecs de Syrie. Les chrétiens de Jérusalem ne pouvaient contester le témoignage d'Étienne, puisque la mort de celui-ci calquait la passion du Seigneur et que ses partisans faisaient naître des communautés exemplaires. Il faudra d'autres expériences, la visite de Pierre chez Corneille (Ac 10) et les pratiques des missionnaires d'Antioche, pour que l'Église s'interroge sur la cohérence de son témoignage, lors de l'assemblée de Jérusalem (Ac 15).

## Paul

Luc écrit en un temps où la figure de Paul est contestée par les Églises judéo-chrétiennes, à tel point qu'il met dans la bouche de Pierre les positions de Paul pour rendre celles-ci acceptables, en Ac 15, 9-11. D'une certaine manière, les Actes dépeignent un nouveau Paul. Mais ils l'intègrent bien au portrait du témoin idéal.

D'abord, chez Luc, Paul n'a pas le titre d'apôtre, puisqu'il n'a pas été témoin oculaire du ministère de Jésus. Mais, mieux qu'un apôtre, il apparaît comme le premier maillon de la chaîne des témoins (Ac 26, 16) qui nous relie au Seigneur. S'il n'a pas "*vu*" ni "*entendu*" Jésus sur terre, il a bénéficié d'une rencontre personnelle du Ressuscité qui compense ce manque, comme le déclare Ananie:

*Le Dieu de nos pères t'a prédestiné à connaître sa volonté, à voir le Juste et à entendre la voix sortie*

de sa bouche; car pour lui tu dois être **témoin** devant tous les hommes de ce que tu as **vu et entendu** (Ac 22, 14-15).

Les apôtres et Étienne comparurent devant le Sanhédrin de Jérusalem. Paul connaît le même sort (22, 30). Mais il donne une audience plus grande encore à l'Évangile en affrontant deux procureurs romains, Félix (Ac 24), puis Festus (Ac 25), et le roi juif Agrippa I<sup>er</sup> (Ac 26). Luc annonce même que Paul comparaitra à Rome devant le tribunal suprême de César (Ac 23, 11; 25, 10; 26, 32).

Les apôtres ont subi des outrages qui les identifient à la destinée du Crucifié. Étienne, exécuté, est allé au bout de cette identification.

Avec Paul, Luc va plus loin. Il avait construit la seconde partie de son Évangile comme une montée de Jésus vers Jérusalem en vue de la Passion. De même, le dernier voyage de Paul s'organise comme une marche consciente vers son destin de témoin enchaîné: "*Après avoir été là (à Jérusalem), il me faut voir également Rome*" (Ac 19, 21; cf. 20, 16; comparer Lc 9, 51; 13, 33). Il prend sa décision "*dans l'Esprit*" (Ac 19, 21). Les prophètes de Césarée annoncent son destin: "*Les Juifs le lieront à Jérusalem, et ils le livreront aux mains des païens*", et Paul se déclare prêt "*à mourir à Jérusalem pour le nom du Seigneur Jésus*" (Ac 21, 11-12; comparer Lc 18, 31-33).

Luc élargit donc peu à peu le cercle des témoins. Depuis les Douze jusqu'à Paul, le Seigneur suscite des envoyés à toute époque, chacun d'eux travaillant à la fois dans la continuité, dans la liberté de son tempérament et dans la disponibilité aux événements. Ainsi Paul ne trouve pas sa place à Jérusalem (Ac 9, 26-30); il apprend sa tâche missionnaire dans les rangs de l'Église d'Antioche et aux côtés de Barnabé (13, 1-3) avant de voler de ses propres ailes (13, 36-40). Mais Luc montre qu'à travers la diversité des témoins et des situations, c'est d'abord l'Esprit qui est à l'œuvre.

### III. L'ESPRIT ET LES TÉMOINS

Dans les Actes, "l'Esprit apparaît comme l'inspirateur de la Parole, l'animateur de la vie interne de l'Église, le guide de la mission". "Inspirateur de la Parole", l'Esprit est donné en vue du témoignage, comme l'affirme le Ressuscité dès le début du livre des Actes (1, 8). Ainsi les Sept doivent être "*remplis d'Esprit Saint et de sagesse*" (6, 3) pour gérer la charité communautaire. Mais, en réalité, ils agiront en tant que témoins de la Parole.

Étienne apparaît comme naturellement "*plein de foi et d'Esprit Saint*" (6, 5), mais sur ce fond, l'Esprit s'empare de lui quand il s'agit de témoigner (6, 10; 7, 55), surtout devant le Sanhédrin. Il est à la fois une présence latente dans les personnes, qualifiées en vue du témoignage, et une impulsion liée aux

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**Les témoins annoncent le Christ dans le langage de leurs interlocuteurs. En d'autres termes, ce sont les destinataires de la Bonne Nouvelle qui façonnent en partie le message des témoins. A Jérusalem, les discours de Pierre s'adressent aux Juifs. L'Apôtre recourt donc à l'Ancien Testament selon des techniques de commentaire en usage dans les synagogues.**

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événements. Il donne avant tout "*l'assurance*": Ac 2, 29 (Pierre); 4, 13 (les apôtres), 4, 29, 31 (la communauté); 28, 31 (Paul). Il ne se substitue pas au témoin, mais il le pousse à s'engager en assistant ses qualités humaines, en lui donnant "*une bouche et une sagesse irrésistibles*", (Lc 21, 15). Ainsi, les adversaires ne peuvent résister à la sagesse d'Étienne (6, 10).

Il est aussi des cas où, "*guide de la mission*", l'Esprit force les événements. En Ac 15, 28, l'expression "*L'Esprit et nous-mêmes avons décidé*" n'est pas simple clause de style, mais l'écho de la découverte de Pierre lors de l'assemblée plénière (cf. 15, 8.11): l'Esprit est venu sur les croyants d'Israël à la Pentecôte et sur les croyants païens chez Corneille. L'Esprit Saint a donc témoigné lui-même, dans les événements, de ce que devait être l'Église.

A la vérité, les interventions directes de l'Esprit déterminent les étapes de la mission. D'abord "la manifestation de l'Esprit le jour de la Pentecôte a le caractère d'une promulgation universelle du message. Luc a voulu représenter tous les peuples de la terre par l'insertion d'une énumération; mais il s'agit encore des Juifs fidèles et des prosélytes de la diaspora, installés alors à Jérusalem". Puis, en conduisant Philippe vers l'Éthiopien, l'Esprit fait passer l'Évangile au monde des craignant-Dieu (Ac 8, 29.39). C'est lui encore qui mène Pierre chez Corneille, à la rencontre des païens sympathisants du judaïsme (Ac 10, 19-20; 11, 12). C'est lui qui suscite

l'activité missionnaire de l'Église d'Antioche vers les païens et, par-là, les voyages missionnaires de Paul (Ac 13, 2-4). L'Esprit empêche Paul de s'enfermer au fond de l'Asie Mineure et, par-là, il pousse la mission vers l'Europe (Ac 16, 6-10). C'est le dernier coup de barre donné pour que l'Évangile atteigne "l'extrémité de la terre"; c'est aussi la dernière intervention directe de l'Esprit.

## POUR CONCLURE

1. Au fil des Actes, les interventions de l'Esprit se font progressivement moins spectaculaires. Si Pierre prononce ses discours "*rempli de l'Esprit Saint*" (ainsi Ac 4, 8), plus rien de tel n'est dit au sujet de Paul. Selon Luc, il y a eu l'âge d'or des origines où l'Esprit devait agir en force, tant abondaient les obstacles et les incertitudes. Nous n'avons plus à attendre de miracles. A travers les témoins héroïques, Dieu a suffisamment agi pour édifier notre propre assurance, et son Esprit habite tout baptisé.

2. Luc souligne une continuité dialectique du témoignage. L'annonce de la résurrection du Christ, l'appel au repentir qui conduit au pardon, voilà le message qui ne saurait changer et qui s'origine dans la confiance à l'égard de ceux qui ont "*vu et entendu*". En revanche, le langage a changé en fonction des milieux nouveaux auxquels s'adressaient les premiers témoins, et les interventions de l'Esprit Saint montrent combien, d'eux-mêmes, ceux-ci étaient peu enclins à affronter ces milieux nouveaux. Si donc il y a une continuité du témoignage, elle consiste paradoxalement à aller toujours vers l'autre.

3. Pourtant irénique et consensuel dans son écriture, Luc ne sème pas l'idée d'un témoignage ecclésial qui serait confortable dans son unanimité. La

richesse du témoignage tient dans la diversité des personnes et des connivences socioculturelles de chacune ou de chaque groupe. Jamais les "*Hellénistes*" ne seront les "*Hébreux*" (Ac 6, 1 s). Le témoignage d'Église consiste en la confrontation, parfois houleuse, des expériences. Pierre accepte de s'expliquer sur l'affaire Corneille (Ac 11, 1-18) et les missionnaires d'Antioche veulent bien soumettre leur liberté à la discussion des autres courants chrétiens (Ac 15).

4. Mais quand le témoin s'avance, avec la fougue d'Étienne, sur des chemins inédits, où trouvera-t-il l'assurance de ne pas trahir la continuité d'un témoignage qui doit rendre le Christ présent ici et maintenant? La réponse de Luc est simple: qu'ils agisse des apôtres, d'Étienne ou de Paul, ces témoins ne se sont pas payés de mots; ils ont payé de leur vie le témoignage rendu à Jésus. Bien sûr, les Actes racontent l'histoire de héros inégalables et ne poussent les lecteurs ni au martyre ni au fanatisme. Simplement, le livre rappelle qu'il n'y a pas de témoignage sans une cohérence entre le discours et la manière de vivre.

5. Enfin, comme prophète, le témoin n'est pas au-dessus de l'histoire, mais dans l'histoire. Il lui incombe de réfléchir aux événements, de découvrir après coup que l'Esprit était là, et cette découverte, fruit de la prière, réorientera sa vie. C'est ce que fait Luc en écrivant l'histoire; c'est en cela que les Actes sont un témoignage.

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# CHRISTOLOGY, AFRICAN WOMEN AND MINISTRY

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Laurenti Magesa

*Laurenti Magesa is a diocesan priest from Musoma, Tanzania. He holds a Ph. D. and D. Th. from St Paul University, Ottawa, Canada.*

## FROM SEXIST AND RACIST CHRISTOLOGIES ...

Jesus Christ invites the whole of humanity to follow him. In his ministry of salvation, men and women of all times and places are called to be his disciples (cf. Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16:15-16; Acts 1:8). It follows, then, that by the very fact of its universality, this invitation to discipleship can never mean that Jesus requires his disciples to become his physical, racial or psychological replicas. Rightly understood it has never implied any such thing. We know, of course, that there were attempts right from the start of the Christian movement to bend Jesus' universal invitation towards exclusion, particularly, on the basis of race. But as Luke shows in the *Book of Acts*, such attempts failed. As Christians, we have to believe that this was due to the action of the Holy Spirit of God in faithfulness to the realisation of the mission of Jesus. It was also in accordance with the order of creation which Jesus came to fulfil.

The creating hand of God, from the beginning of human existence, guaranteed the uniqueness of every individual which, though in some respects can be so elusive and impalpable, is the mark of the divine in every man and woman. But, in other respects the distinction is clear and beyond equivocation. Without anyone's *personal* choice, for instance, God made each person a member of a given sex, race and culture. Thus if we read the reality of creation correctly, and if we are to believe the message of the Scriptures — particularly, at this point, the meaning of the myth of creation (in the *Book of Genesis*) — diversity in the whole of creation and in the human race stands as God's eternal intention.

Male and female, God created the human race in its duality and with all of the essential diversities and differences that constitute man and woman, male and female, masculine and feminine. Indeed, the diversities and differences in the human race are not only

those of sex, gender and culture, but also those that relate to physiology and psychology, not only across genders and cultures, but even within them regarding individual persons. We are told in *Genesis* that uncorrupted, God saw all of this diversity as good, indeed very good (Gn 1:31). As Restorer of divine order — what we call the Reign of God — Jesus has incorporated this diversity into the economy of the salvation of the world. That is how authentic Christian faith perceives it and should not set out to obliterate it.

In the understanding of the relationship between human existence and salvation, diversity must therefore be seen theologically as an irreducible fact. Reduce humanity to requirements of physical, psychological or racial identity among human beings or individuals to Jesus and you have the perfect rationale for the destruction of one person, race or gender by the different, dominant other. In forced identity, in the sense of uniformity, begins the desecration of the Spirit, *Ruah* of God, that has taken shape and is inherent in every person. Some historical and current events can be considered as illustrations of this desecration of God's Spirit in the other. These may include the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Slave Trade, anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, the near extermination of the original peoples of the Americas, the treatment of the Aborigines of Australia in the past, etc. In our own times, are the ravages of tribal strife all over the place, all of the modern forms of ethnic cleansing, the intolerance against minorities, the rampant xenophobia, and the perpetual subjugation and instrumentalisation of women everywhere. The list can certainly be expanded. All of these atrocities have as their foundation the requirement of sameness among human beings.

The logic here is simple, sad but thoroughly destructive. It amounts to this, the different *others*



are, on account of that fact alone, non-persons. They are more or less fair game, precisely because they are different from *us* by gender, race, culture or class. The ultimate conclusion of this logic is always this, that either identity exists and is enforced or that which is different must be removed. It is the reasoning not only of *we* against *them*, but of *we* who are worthy and deserve such and such, and they who are not of much value and deserve very little, if anything at all. It is the sort of perception of reality that scatters rather than brings together. Unfortunately, God is invariably called upon to sanction this kind of thinking and attitude.

It should be obvious why the Christian faith obliges all believers to reject this sort of perspective as unwarranted by the message of Jesus. Uniformity is contrary to the Divine intention for humanity as far as we can gather from the Christian Scriptures according to the best of today's interpretation. On the contrary, faith in Christ urges us to treasure, to be thankful for and to protect the God-given biological and cultural differences as well as all other legitimate diversities. Precisely because these diversities are God-given, the practice of any deliberate exclusion and discrimination based on them cannot be sustained on Christian and theological grounds. Consequently, they cannot be sanctioned on the basis of any legal prescription that Christians could accept in good conscience. If that is the case, Christians may never entertain as valid, notions of discipleship that exclude one another or categories of people solely on account of legitimate human diversity; something they have no control over. This would be antithetical to the truth of both Jesus Christ and the kernel of our great Christian Tradition.

Whatever else may be said about St Paul's praxis conditioned by his existential socio-economic and religious environment (and a lot *can* be and *has* been said about it with justification) his warning against unjustifiable exclusion of people from Christian discipleship because they are different represents in a unique way the clarity of the authentic Christian Tradition on this point. Perhaps more explicitly than anyone else in the Christian Scriptures, after the life and teaching of Christ himself, Paul argues that good human diversities are divinely granted and sanctioned. They have to be cherished. They do not, he stresses, qualitatively differentiate people in God's sight. Instead they make them all children of God and friends of Christ. All are one in Christ, Paul emphasises, despite varieties of race, class, nationality and gender (cf. Gal 3:28). His own ministry among the non-Jews, the *gentiles* as he calls them, was a witness to this conviction.

A true Christian community for Paul is a celebration in thanksgiving and unity in diversity among the disciples of Christ throughout the world. That is why the Church is a *eucharistic* (thanks-offering) assembly; a gathering together, an *ekklesia* of women and men of various viewpoints, social classes, races and cultures. Paul's wrath against the Corinthians in their desecration of what should have been the Lord's Supper, the meal of unity despite differences, is understandable within this context (cf. 1 Cor 11:17-22). He fumes because of their segregation based on class. They are not celebrating oneness, but destroying the Body of Christ and the Reign of God and to Paul, such behaviour is abhorrent.

To stress, as we do here, that Christ's invitation to discipleship, which is the meaning of the Good News, is for all human beings regardless of their God-given diversities, might perhaps appear trite and unnecessary to some today. But is it really? Not so at all in my opinion. I have already alluded to the Judaising tendencies at the beginning of the Christian movement. I have also already mentioned some historical and current tragedies arising out of intolerance towards differences and diversities. But perhaps it needs to be mentioned also that some pretty strong but clear, from the point of view of the Christian message of unity in diversity, unwarrantable convictions of such towering theologians as Augustine on matters pertaining to this issue persist. Augustine is not alone, for one can cite Thomas Aquinas as well. Philosophical, theological and spiritual influence from thinkers with similar views throughout the history of Christianity is deep in the Church. This is often used today as justification to deny full privileges of Christian discipleship to many followers of Christ.

Theology and people are, however, generally becoming more and more conscious of the necessary human limits in the thought of those early Fathers, as well as in the historical structures of the Church that were based on it. Just as St Peter, as recorded by Luke in *Acts*, was constrained by the Spirit to speak against discrimination with regard to denying people the Sacrament of Baptism on the basis of tribal belonging, many people today feel constrained by the same Spirit to speak out against sexist and other alienating christologies that are used even today to direct the Church's life and order. Much contemporary theology understands Peter's words to be an indictment equally of discrimination based on tribe and nationality as of exclusion from ministry based on any God-given differences, including the difference of *sex/gender*. With Peter, the realisation has irrever-

sibly dawned among many now that “God treats everyone on the same basis. Whoever fears God and does what is right is acceptable to God no matter what race [or, indeed, gender]” (cf. Acts 10:34-35).

### ... AS WELL AS CHRISTOLOGIES OF POWER AND DOMINATION ...

The fundamental equality advocated by Paul consists in unity in diversity in the God of Jesus Christ. It needs to be concretely and practically expressed in Church structures and practice of leadership and authority, in its life and order and in its forms of ministry. The same thing applies to Peter’s basic consciousness that God’s attitude to persons is determined solely by the latter’s attitude with regard to love-justice, not their race, class or sex. Current understanding of the Gospel message stresses the aspects that these structures were always called to be and reflect in Christ. The Spirit intended them to be structures of authority of service, not of power and domination.

Nevertheless, it is clear that, historically overly-influenced by worldly models and appetites, many Church structures have unfortunately come to base themselves more and more upon christologies of domination and exclusion. Within them some Church leaders, otherwise personally good and holy, are often not helped to become leaders of the assembly of the communion of the faithful in humility, after the example of the Founder. Instead these structures co-opt leaders into behaving rather more like governors (*emperors*) of the people. Because of the structures we have in the Church, the controlling analogy from Church leaders has come to be that of Christ as an emperor who controls by the (often bloody) power of the sword (a show of prestige and glory) after the manner of the historical Constantine. It is less the power of the Suffering Servant of Deutero-Isaiah, who liberates by his seeming weakness in suffering for others (cf. Is 42:3-4; 50:4-7; 52:14; 53:12).

Yet Jesus’s vision and entire practice of ministry in respect to leadership is one of the clearest in the Christian Scriptures. It is summarised in the words attributed to him that we find in *Mark* “For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mk 10:45). But, practical change in this area is one of the most difficult things to achieve in the process of Christian conversion. In the historical life and presence of Jesus himself, if we can accept the testimony of the Johannine writer, his disciples must have frequently vied with each other for raw, dominating power; for

opportunities of authority to rule, not to offer service. Against this their Teacher’s warning could not have been more direct, sharper or sterner. The Johannine writer has Jesus spell it out to this effect:

The rulers of the Gentiles, as you know, boss their subjects around and those in authority over them act tyrannically. *It must not be so among you.* Whoever is entrusted with leadership authority among you must use it to serve. In service will any leader among you achieve greatness (cf. Mt 20:25-27).

Jesus knew, since as narrated in the Gospels, his most inviting temptation, and therefore the one most difficult to overcome, must probably have been the third (in the Matthean version of the Gospel) which reads, “Then the Devil took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their greatness. ‘All of this I will give you’, the Devil said, ‘if you kneel down and worship me’” (Mt 4:8-9 and parallels). In turning the temptation down, Jesus was conscious that he was turning down power, political and economic clout. He was quite aware that he was thereby frustrating the expectations of many in Israel at that time with regard to their version of the *messiah* to come. He understood and appreciated the fact that he was going to pay a dear price for this. Notice his disciples’ question as late in his association with them as after his Resurrection: “Lord, is this the time that you will give the Kingdom back to Israel?” (cf. Acts 1:6). They still had not understood!

In turning down power as we know it, Jesus was aware that he was exposing himself to be seen by everyone as a failure. But the point is that he *did* turn it down. He told the tempter in effect, “Forget it!” He preferred the authority that comes from humble service. “Worship the Lord your God and serve only him”, he cited the Hebrew Scriptures to Satan in justification of his position. With that firm attitude, he had freed himself from co-optation by the establishment mentality, that of effecting change through a show of wealth and domination. Constantinian as well as previous and subsequent secular imperiousness in Christian leadership is hereby unequivocally rejected. Isaiah’s liberating model of leadership is, at least theologically, confirmed. Jesus’s crucifixion and death on the cross, and the rise and phenomenal spread of the Christian movement from such *weak* beginnings, would confirm in practice the evangelical power of this form of authority.

There is only one conclusion we can draw from this: *If Church structures do not help to free a*

*person for service and thus sanctify them; if, on the contrary, they lead in the opposite direction of creating an environment of oppression and fear, it is not Christian to maintain them.* The entire world knows that even with the best personal intentions, the best of human beings quickly succumbs to the corruption of worldly power and the desire to dominate others. No one is entirely free from this potential sin, perhaps the *original sin*, in the hearts of all human beings. It has been said that a person soon acquires a taste for the glorious smoke of incense when constantly surrounded by it. At the very least, one cannot help but smell like it. In the absence of appropriate structures of checks and balances in the use of power, even religious power, glory, not service, unfortunately soon become the underlying motifs in the practice of leadership. It is then a short step from here to prejudice and justification of physical and psychological violence against all types of people in the name of Christ. Once again, we have too much glaring historical evidence to dwell on this.

### ... TO A CHRISTOLOGY OF LOVE, JUSTICE AND MERCY ...

The only acceptable christology that authentic Christian Tradition offers is one that is founded on the liberating/redemptive action of Jesus. Already in the Hebrew Scriptures, there are plenty of intimations of this. We have just made allusion to the Prophet Isaiah. The Prophet Micah sums it all up in this way, “Human being, you have been told what God requires of you. It is only this: act justly, live tenderly and walk in humility with God” (Mi 6:8). Passionate compassion, mercy, understanding, forgiveness, unaffected love; these are the characteristics of a christology faithful to the kernel of the message of Christ as demonstrated in his life as well as shown in the most germane Christian Tradition.

Foreshadowing Jesus’ ministry, Mary, his mother, underlined the same christology in her song at the beginning of Luke’s account of the Gospel (cf. Lk 1:46-55). We now refer to it simply as the *Magnificat*. But at the same time, unconsciously perhaps, Mary also applies christological qualities to herself in this song. Though weak and downtrodden, she notes probably also in reference to her ambiguous condition of pregnancy out of wedlock, she hopes for vindication; a virtual *resurrection*. She is perfectly sure that because of her acceptance of God’s message, her trust and obedience to it, she will be vindicated of shame and raised to glory. When this happens, it will be the real, deserved shame of those who, by their behaviour, are haughty and

self-righteous that will come to light. The oppressors and unjust powerful will be *deposed* and dispossessed by God’s hand.

Mary in the *Magnificat* does not speak only in the passive voice as it might appear at first. Underlying her seemingly passive speech, there is a strong, assertive voice in her tone. Take the story as a whole. By consenting to co-operate in the foundational work of the liberation of the world as mother of Jesus, Mary is extremely active. Indeed, it is the active voice in her “yes” that enables her to speak in the passive voice as recipient of God’s Word. It enables her to await in assurance the vindication of her innocence against spoken or unspoken accusations of infidelity to her forthcoming marriage, among other things. Of course, this points to the Paschal Mystery. Jesus suffered rejection and derision and died out of love for us, *in fidelity to God*. From his conscious act of accepting a shameful death trusting in the power of God to vindicate him, humanity has been given the chance to convert or change course (*metanoia*). It has been given the chance to rise in the true and lasting glory of the Resurrection.

In the dying and rising of Jesus we find the whole meaning and culmination of the incarnation. The Christ event — the birth, death and Resurrection of Jesus — is the axis of the faith of the Christian. The extensive genealogies supplied in the Gospels (cf. Mt 1:1-17 and Lk 3:23-38) are meant to underline the seriousness of the incarnation, life and death of Jesus for Christian belief. Through the incarnation, as his mother Mary had prophesied in the *Magnificat*, and as did also old Simeon and Anna (cf. Lk 2:34-35;38) Jesus began the mission of uplifting humanity from humiliation and made all of us children of God. Through it too, God became one of us, our neighbour and friend (Emmanuel, Mt 1:23). Through it, and as completed in the Easter happenings, all humanity is gathered as one in Christ on the way to the eternal reign of God.

Neither in Mary’s song nor in the Paschal Mystery is there any hint of prejudice, sexual exclusion or discrimination. Judgement is solely based on one’s life-attitude of compassion (cf. Mt 25:35-40). What is prominent and seen as criteria for evaluation concern behaviour, i.e., justice, love and mercy, not gender or nationality. Even the judgement on moral grounds is best left to God (cf. Mt 7:1-5; Lk 6:37-38, 41-42). It all goes to show that any christology that in one way or other condones any form of discrimination on grounds of gender, race or class needs to go to school at the feet of the Jesus of the Gospels. He is the Messenger of the all-loving,

all-inclusive God, who is capable even from stones (in the sense of the most poor, marginalised, downtrodden, kicked-around of humanity, the *other* in the most radical sense of the word) “to raise up children to Abraham” (cf. Mt 3:9 and parallels).

### ... FOUNDED ON THE MEANING OF THE MISSION AND MINISTRY OF JESUS ...

The power to call people of different races, nationalities and both genders to one fold in God comes from the meaning of the mission and ministry of Jesus, which is royal, priestly and prophetic. Our Tradition is unambiguous about these attributes of Christ. He is indeed King, Priest and Prophet. These are ontological qualities definitely proper to him. In the economy of salvation, however, they are eminently functional. We risk doing violence to these attributes of Christ if we fail to see and treat them in his context of the salvific ministry. This is why christology must situate them in the context of the historical experience of Jesus’ mission and ministry. Otherwise his kingly, prophetic and priestly attributes are liable to be misinterpreted and misused to buttress structures of oppression and to sanctify alienating forms of authority in the Church.

The very essence of the salvation work of Christ is for humanity to be relational. This is what the three attributes of his ministry call for. They derive from the Trinitarian character of the Christian God. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul explains this point succinctly: “Our message”, he writes, “is that God was making all humanity his friends through Christ. God did not keep an account of their sins, and he has given us the message which tells how he makes them his friends” (cf. 2 Cor 5:19). As Paul sees it, the purpose of the entire ministry of Christ is to make us sharers in “the righteousness of God”. Such is what he wishes to confirm without equivocation to the Corinthian Church:

Here we are, then, speaking for Christ, as though God himself were making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ’s behalf: let God change you from enemies into his friends! Christ was without sin, but for our sake God made him share our sin in order that *in union with him we might share the righteousness of God* (cf. 2 Cor 5:20-21).

The *righteousness of God* consists in the relationship of love that exists in and, indeed, constitutes the Holy Trinity. Jesus’ kingship, prophethood and priesthood have meaning in this relational sense. Over against guidelines, rules and principles, Jesus posits context, connectedness and relationships as the foundations of his way of life, which is Life and

Truth. The Fourth Gospel puts this pithily, “I do not call you servants any longer, because a servant does not know what the master is doing. Instead, I call you friends, because I have told you everything I heard from my Father” (Jn 15:15). This means that through Christ and his message, Christians have been enabled to share in the relationship of the Trinity. If there is any longer any Commandment, rule or principle for the Christian, it is now this relational one of love; a love which knows no boundaries or discriminations. “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8) and Christians must walk in that love of God to be true to their discipleship (cf. Mt 22:40). As a matter of fact, perfect love cancels all laws, regulations and principles. Yes indeed, *Love, and do what you will*.

In the functional context of salvation and in this Trinitarian relational view of Jesus’ ministry, the usual human systems and structures we would expect to be the operational modes of his kingship, prophethood and priesthood are turned on their heads. What ruler would not call upon the armies at his disposal to defend him in times of crisis? Yet this is what Jesus would not do. Acknowledging his ontological kingship, sometimes implicitly and at other times explicitly, he is not ready to follow what we would *normally* expect to be its obvious normal and logical consequence. So that, for example, Jesus turns down Satan’s second temptation (Matthew’s version) to throw himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple. As God’s Son and King, the Tempter observes quite correctly, God would have ordered his hosts of angels to “hold you up with their hands, so that not even your feet will be hurt on the stones” (Mt 4:5-6). But Jesus is saying that his is another style of rulership. He repeats this even more forcefully during his arrest. Against the proposition to fight as the kings we know would, and even though he could muster there and then “more than twelve legions of angels”, he orders swords put away (cf. Mt 26:51-54)!

In at least two other instances in the Gospels Jesus defines the nature of his kingship rather clearly, and in terms contrary to human expectations. At his trial before Pilate Jesus accepts the title of ontological kingship (in all of the Gospels). But he feels constrained to say that its nature or function does not involve calling upon his followers to “fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish authorities”. The nature of his authority is to speak and do the truth (cf. Jn 18:33-37). “And what is truth?” Pilate did not wait for an answer to his own question. Had he done so, Jesus would most probably have referred to what he had previously said to the Temple officials at the High Priest’s

court, that his entire life and teaching witnessed to the truth (cf. Jn 18:19-21). This

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***We need to remember that in the final analysis, the real Gospel of Jesus is never, primarily, a written text. By reducing it to such a text in our theology of ministry, we have robbed it of its impact in Christian pedagogy and on values determining Christian living.***

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entails service, in inverse order, from what the world knows and expects. Jesus' disciples were privileged to have the practical meaning and demands of his kingship actually demonstrated to them as recorded in John:

You call me Teacher and Lord, and it is right that you do so, because that is what I am. I, your Lord and Teacher, have just washed your feet. You, then, should wash one another's feet. I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you. I am telling you the truth: no slave is greater than the master, and no messenger is greater than the one who sent him/her. *Now that you know this truth, how fortunate you will be if you put it into practice!* (Jn 13:12-17).

It is within this same context that the function of Jesus as priest and prophet fits. Except for the specific purpose of inviting partnership with people in love, Jesus chooses neither to show nor exercise these qualities. In the sense of prophecy as foretelling the future, he resists repeated requests from his disciples to utilise it. We have already alluded to their pressure on him to be specific as to the time of the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel. His answer? "The times and occasions are set by my Father's own authority, and it is not for you to know when they will be" (Acts 1:6-7). Substantially the same reply is given to James and John, the sons of Zebedee, with regard to their own (cf. Mk 10:35-40) or, on their behalf, their mother's (cf. Mt 20:20-23) request for positions of influence in heaven. He resists temptations to impress by being prophet in the conventional sense.

But even more striking is Jesus' profession of ignorance concerning his own Second Coming! "The Father alone knows" is all he can say (Mt 24:36; Mk 13:32). Yet the text forming the wider context of this profession, and within which it is situated, particularly in *Matthew* and *Luke* (cf. Mt 24:37-39; Lk 12:36-37; 21:34-36) presents Jesus as emphasising

one thing: that true prophecy is to be alert and ready in deciphering as correctly as possible what is required of love here and now and doing it. The prophetic ministry of Jesus, in other words, is knowing the will of God which consists in love, mercy and justice, and living it.

The same is true of his quality and ministry as Great High Priest. His priesthood is a functional one, intended to gather every human being in love before God's throne. *The Letter to the Hebrews* is classic here, as well as the *kenosis* passage in the *Letter to the Philippians*. Both *Letters* are unambiguous as to the purpose of the incarnation and Jesus' act of dying from which priesthood in terms of the economy of salvation is made manifest. That purpose is none other than compassion; compassion which is meant to gather all human beings to God. Jesus' compassion as our High Priest, who knows us inside out, gives us confidence to "approach God's throne" (Heb 4:14-16). It is his example of emptying himself completely for us that Christian faith, through Baptism, invites us all to approximate in our lives. In sharing in his kingship, prophethood and priesthood in this way in a functional manner, we also share in these qualities in a fundamental ontological way.

#### ... WHICH REFLECTS THE EMPIRICAL EXPERIENCE OF AFRICAN WOMEN ...

To recapitulate the above in the economy of salvation, the attributes of Christ as Prophet, King and Priest are intimately connected. Jesus is Prophet, not only because he *hears* and *sees* the word of God and announces it (this is what the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures also did) but over and above them, he *is* the Word of God. Through his person he announces God, so much so that anyone who has seen him has seen God (cf. Jn 14:8-11). But it is precisely because he is Prophet in this sense that he is also King. Through Jesus' person God establishes his reign and he does so supremely through sacrificing his own life as Priest for the purpose of gathering all creation together once again in God. Unlike the priests before him, Jesus is not concerned with extrinsic purification rites or cult, but with liberating consciences from dead work towards a life of *service* of the living God.

Now without exaggeration, African women do capture in an existential and pragmatic way in their lives these attributes and qualities of Christ. As is now well acknowledged, African women have been treated rather like so many worthless *stones* in the cultures of Africa, and doubly so when the continent was subjugated by slavery, colonialism and

neo-colonialism. Yet through the role or ministry they have played in African society, their *self-emptying* unto death for the sake of life, love and unity of family as well as society in general, it is theologically clear that God has raised them as his own dear children by virtue of their life experience of suffering which echoes closely that of Jesus. The stones which the builders rejected have become the cornerstones of the preservation of life (cf. Mt 21:42). The metaphor of Ps 118 [117]:22 which Jesus applies to himself can, in many senses, be applied to them. In what ways?

Despite the marginalisation and humiliation they have suffered from society and from the Church throughout history, African women have represented in their life the meaning and significance of the royal, prophetic and priestly qualities of Christ by being the main food suppliers, the organisers and the bonds of unity for the African family and society. Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike describes African women as, “The energy house from which ... [a] strong sense of unity among the family members is passed on from one generation to another and from which solidarity ensues in the form of hospitality, generosity, kindness and gratitude”. These may not, at first sight, be seen as theological functions, but a moment’s reflection will show their intrinsic connection to the pragmatic purpose of God’s Reign on earth. The picture of Jesus which has emerged so far in our analysis has been that of a person whose love for God is reflected in his love for humanity; a *love* which is defined in terms of freeing people from all sorts of captivity: sickness, hunger, thirst, nakedness, fear, and so on (cf. Mt 25:35-40). It is only the person who does this that performs the work of Christ (cf. Lk 4:18-19) and of God (Mt 7:21-23). African women have done just that.

Let us underline an important point here: *the only way to love God is to love humanity and the only way to realise concretely the realm of God is through love*. To anyone who reads the signs of the times in faith, as the Second Vatican Council based on the Gospels insisted that Christians do, African women have manifested the realm of the God of Jesus through their practice of love as service and self-giving on behalf of the entire African society. Like Jesus, they have cherished the life of all at their own expense and throughout the ages have poured themselves out for the sake of the rest of society. If the royal, priestly and prophetic qualities of Jesus find their *raison d’être* and completion in the outpouring of himself for the sake of the world, the analogical (I would say almost “literal”) affinity

between his life and ministry and that of the African women cannot be mistaken.

It is worthwhile, in this connection, to listen to the description of the function of the African woman supplied by the poet, Okot p’Bitek, in his book, *Song of Ocol*. It sounds as if it is literally culled from the characterisation of the Messiah in the Scriptures. African women go through almost the same experience that Jesus as Saviour did:

*Woman of Africa*  
*Sweeper*  
*Smearing floors and walls*  
*With cow dung and black soil.*  
*Cook. Aya, the baby on your back*  
*Washer of dishes,*  
*Planting, weeding, harvesting*  
*Store-keeper, builder*  
*Runner of errands,*  
*Cart, lorry, donkey ...*  
*Woman of Africa*  
*What are you not?*

The African woman is supremely mother. The function of *mothering* in Africa, is more than its mere biological sense. It incorporates nurturing of life from conception to death as well as acting as go-between and peacemaker in conflict and being central in teaching the children. Motherhood in Africa entails a lot of patience and suffering, without which, society or even better put, life, collapses although this task is generally relegated to an inferior status among many an African people. One hears comments like, this is “women’s nature”, and “women’s work”. African men do all they can to distance themselves from such responsibilities. But African women shoulder them, not for the purpose of power and glory, but to serve life. In doing so they place themselves at the centre of the salvific message and purpose of Jesus. This happens through the power of the Spirit of God. This Spirit makes them adopted children of God in a very special way and so co-heirs with Christ. The promise is made quite clear by St Paul:

All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God ... and if children, then heirs, both heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, *provided we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him* (cf. Rom 8:14-17).

By doing what they do, by suffering with Christ, African women are co-heirs with Christ and will be glorified with him.

**... AS FEMINIST THEOLOGIANS EVERYWHERE, AND IN AFRICA, ARE SAYING ...**

This realisation is becoming more and more clear in the writings of feminist theologians in Africa and all over the world. "Whose experience counts in theological reflection?" They are asking. Women are now insisting that their experience as women in the world and in the Church be taken seriously as a source for theological reflection. Among the many voices in feminist theology today, an important strand refers to how this exercise ought to lead to a renewed christology and ecclesiology.

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Searching the Synoptic Gospels Rosemary Radford Ruether, for example, finds in them, "a startling element of iconoclasm toward the traditional subordination of women in Jewish life". Not only does Jesus have women as his intimate friends and companions, he likens himself to a "mother hen" and identifies his role with that which women were supposed to play during his time. All of this leads Ruether to conclude that we have distorted or ignored what Jesus wants to tell us in Mt 23:8-11, which is that all of us, men and women, have only one Father, God in heaven. If the intention expressed here, which has to do with the equality of all believers regardless of gender and social differences, "had been maintained", Ruether notes:

The very root of sexism and clericalist hierarchism ... would have been decisively undercut. The fatherhood of God could not have been understood as establishing male ruling-class power over subjugated groups in the Church or Christian society, but as that equal fatherhood that makes all Christians equals, brothers and sisters.

We have, therefore, to recapture the true Jesus of the Gospels and the earliest Christian Tradition. Among other things, Elizabeth A. Johnson recalls for us one attribute of Jesus not given much emphasis in

contemporary christology. Yet, it is one that the early Christian communities stressed and which carries with it enormous consequences for the present. For them Jesus was also *Sophia* (Wisdom) the female personification of God. Approaching him from this perspective, as Teresa M. Hinga has explained, rather than the familiar but imperious image of Jesus as warrior, conqueror or subjugator, he would acquire a different, more Christ-like face. He would come to be seen as a friend, enabler and harbinger of freedom. This is no small shift in christology.

Feminine spirituality in tune with such a shift in christology means nothing less than an *ecclesio-genesis*, which Sandra M. Schneiders refers to as, a rebirth of the Church. It is so new that it goes beyond patching up things in the old Church structure (cf. Mk 2:21). What the new spirituality calls for is a Church in touch with the goodness and holiness of the body, with nature, with community and with sharing of experiences in ritual and intent both on personal and structural transformation for justice and true human community. This is the sort of community that arises only "as a mixture of those things, values, roles, and temperaments that we divide into the feminine and the masculine", as Mercy Amba Oduyoye points out. Consequently the struggle is against all "entrenched attitudes and structures that can only operate if dichotomies or hierarchies are maintained".

**... AND SHOULD LEAD TO A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF STRUCTURES OF MINISTRY ...**

But contradicting this christological experience of the women of Africa the patriarchally controlled Church here has often made use of the myth of the fall in *Genesis*, not only to blame women in ways far beyond what the myth itself suggests, but also to exclude them from certain forms of ministry in the Church. Such interpretations have justified for many a man and many social and religious institutions the exercise of control and subjugation of women. African cultures also have many such myths and they have been used to the same effect. As nurturers of life, women have been extremely vulnerable to these myths. Since their primary concern has always been to preserve life as fully as they could, they have refused to abandon this ministry despite the negative constraints historically imposed upon them. But so did Jesus. However, the extent to which women have been brutalised and humiliated, is the same extent that society and the Church have suffered diminishment because as the saying goes,



“destroying your mother can only mean that ultimately you are destroying yourself”.

Without abandoning the oppressors, Christ showed a *preferential option* for the poor and marginalised. Though this has not been historically emphasised, it is true from studying the Gospels that he was also very concerned about women who formed a significant part of the marginalised at his time. The haemorrhaging woman (cf. Mt 9:20-22) the Canaanite woman (cf. Mk 7:25-30; Mt 15:22-28) the whole episode concerning the Samaritan woman (cf. Jn 4:1-42) the case of the adulterous woman (cf. Jn 8:1-11) the incident about the woman who came to weep at the feet of Jesus (cf. Lk 7:36-50) and Jesus’ relationship with Mary Magdalene, who was a companion of Jesus almost throughout his public ministry (*passim* in the Gospels) as well as with Mary and Martha of Bethany, the sisters of Lazarus his friend (cf. Lk 10:38-42; Jn 11) are just a few examples among many others which illustrate the solicitude of Jesus towards women. All of these are realities in the situation of women in Africa today. There is no reason not to believe that Christ shows them the same concern.

It is quite clear from the Gospels, on the other hand, that both women and men formed the band of Jesus’ disciples. As I have just mentioned, Mary Magdalene was with him almost continually throughout his public ministry. Most conspicuously and tellingly, women were there along the way of his journey to the crucifixion, identifying with his pain and suffering. It is noteworthy that Jesus takes time to talk to them on the significance of his impending death (cf. Lk 23:27-31). Further, not only are they the first witnesses of the Resurrection, it is to the very same Mary of Magdala that Jesus first appears after his resurrection (cf. Jn 20: 11-18). It would seem that these facts would have profound implications for the theology and practice of ministry in the Church today. It would seem also that just as much significance should be placed in our own circumstances on the precedent in the early Church of the ministry of such women as Priscilla/Prisca (cf. Acts 18:2), Damaris (cf. Acts 17:34), Tabitha/Dorcas (cf. Acts 9:36-42). Given the prevailing environment then, the fact that they are mentioned, at all, means that they did more for the early Church than the writers give them credit for.

What all of this says is that efforts at the liberation of the Church from all forms of oppression are doomed not to succeed until and unless they are linked with efforts to liberate women. Richard Foran, one of my students, has perceptively noted in a paper

recently that he sees the struggle for the full emancipation of women in the Church and society as the gravitational central theme of theology and the hallmark of its authentic Christian spirit. He believes that it may well be that the foundational oppressive structure in society and the Church is that relating to the complete distortion of the man/woman relationship, and that all other oppressive structures, systems and relationships proceed from this archetypal distortion. As he sees it, it is the feminine in our humanity that has to be recovered if the Church is to be truly a community of disciples, the *Body of Christ*, the sacrament of communion between God and humanity.

The image of the *body* in the Church and ministry ought to go beyond masculinity and femininity, that is, beyond gender. It concerns attitudes and values we hold and witness to. This is what we have tried to establish in the foregoing paragraphs. At the same time, it needs to be recognised that the meaning of the *body* in the life of Jesus, and in relation to the ministry of women in the Church, has not yet been fully explored and exploited. We need to remember that in the final analysis, the real Gospel of Jesus is never, primarily, a written text. By reducing it to such a text in our theology of ministry, we have robbed it of its impact in Christian pedagogy and on values determining Christian living. Before being a text, the Gospel is the broken, crucified and resurrected Body of Jesus himself. The Gospel, in other words, is Good Friday; it is the Cross; it is Easter. If this is the case, the Gospel text is written on the bodies of African women which, like Christ’s body, have been brutalised and crucified in every way “so that they may have life, and have it fully” (Jn 10:10). Thus if representation of Christ (*in persona Christi*) is a determinative qualification for ordained ministry, perhaps it might best be sought by the Church among these broken bodies of African women which witness unmistakably to the identity and mission of Christ.

An exclusively male ministerial structure can hardly be said to constitute the fullness of the Church. An approach to ministry that takes into account African women’s faithfulness to life and to God, as these are expressed by their lives, as qualities of the redemptive work of Christ truly reflects the Christian meaning of ministry as a sacrament of salvation through service and love. As Rosemary Edet and Bette Ekeya have argued in their essay on Church women in Africa as a theological community:

Perhaps the major task in building the Church in Africa is the fundamental rethinking of the basic approaches to the theology of the Church, because

the one consistent and persistent scandal that obscures the full symbolic presence of the Church as the sacrament of communion between God and humanity is male predominance. The vision of the Church as androgynous can contribute significantly to the crisis posed by the need to renew the Church in contemporary African society.

### **... TOWARDS TRUE UNITY AND COMMUNION IN THE CHURCH**

We must be aware, however, that the historical experience of women in Africa, though it has been redemptive, cannot be blessed as desirable. Neither was Jesus' suffering and death desirable or a situation to be maintained. In her book, *Beyond Anger*, Carolyn Osiek interprets Paul's understanding of the death and Resurrection of Jesus "as an image of transformation. The more lowly and humiliated the way of death, the more surprising the opposite extreme of exaltation and new life". If rejection, suffering and death happened to Jesus, Osiek argues, it is bound to happen to his disciples. But like Jesus himself, they are called to transform this life-denying situation into a life-giving one. They are not to acquiesce in it as given, but to change it for their own good and the good of all. Osiek further warns, we can rejoice and glory in the cross only when it is an inevitable consequence. We may never seek it for itself. This is a caution and responsibility that African women must take to heart. The task before them is one of redemption for themselves and others from the cultural and religious shackles that bind them in Africa and to do so with life-generating love. According to Osiek, the following is a prophetic task:

To speak and act publicly in the name of God to recall members of the community to their destiny and identity before God; to interpret the signs of the times; to condemn injustice; to keep before the eyes of all the vision of the reign of God in its full purity in the midst of historical compromises.

Man and woman are the true image and likeness of God. The Church is called to be and mirror this communion of the male and female humanity in God. It cannot reject its androgynous character and remain faithful to itself. Male and female must work as a body. This implies the full incorporation of women into the ranks of ministers at all levels of the Church under criteria more faithful to Christ. These include the ability to say, as Jesus did:

Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead are given life, the poor receive the good news [that they are poor no

more] (cf. Lk 7:22); and also to declare with one's life: Today this text of Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing (cf. Lk 4:21).

In as far as they give life where there is none, in as far as they embody the qualities and message of Jesus the Christ in any way in their life experience, it is difficult to see how women cannot stand in *persona Christi*.

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# NO SALVATION OUTSIDE GLOBALISATION?

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Felix Wilfred

*Fr Felix Wilfred is Professor at the Department of Christian Studies at the University of Madras, and was formerly President of the Indian Theological Association.*

“Push Ahead with Reforms, Mr Rao”, so reads an article in the issue of *India Today* of 15 January, 1995. The recently concluded elections in some of the States is generally viewed as a referendum by the people over the economic policies that are today being followed. In the face of this situation, the author of the article wants the government not to yield to ‘populism’ — as he calls it — which was responsible for the loss of the elections. He is only a representative of those millions of middle and upper class Indians who believe that globalisation is good for India, because they benefit from it. Their economic interests also become their faith.

I cannot refrain from drawing a parallel between what was held by many Britishers and some people from our own country before the up surge of nationalism. They believed that it was good for India to be governed by the British. The Indians who so thought were almost invariably those who benefited from the British colonial rule in terms of money, position, privileges, etc. It is interesting to note how history repeats itself, even though situations have changed!

Today, as then, the conflict is between two groups of people: an upper and middle caste/class group which has turned euphoric *vis-à-vis* globalisation and liberalisation, and the masses of Indian people who, though they may not be able to argue sophisticatedly for their point, nevertheless, at their gut-level resist the prevailing policies, because they see and experience the effects on their day-to-day life.

This article is an attempt to reflect on globalisation from a theological point of view. I shall consider the question from three angles: globalisation as an economic process, globalisation as an attitude and a way of life, and finally, Christian community and globalisation.

## GLOBALISATION AS ECONOMIC PROCESS

I am not attempting to make any definition of globalisation, but only highlighting some characteristics of this process. Globalisation is a word of rather recent origin — roughly two decades old. Even then, it has found world-wide currency today. In the period following decolonisation and political independence of the Third World countries, the *inter-national* relationships among the countries at bilateral and multilateral level were considered very important and viewed as mutually beneficial.

This language and practice now seems to be on the wane. Today countries and nations no longer relate to each other in freedom and amity. Rather, what we experience is, so to say, a mechanistic process happening out there to which all nations and all peoples have to conform. They all have to fall in line. Globalisation is a mechanistic process (and therefore most easily manipulable by the wielders of power) in the face of which there is no choice, no alternative. The most insidious aspect of this ideology is that it could present itself as the only way. It creates a certain sense of inevitability and absoluteness. In this sense it is akin to the Semitic religious traditions which have the strong tendency for absoluteness and dogmatism.

It is this which we find reflected when we are told by the rich First World nations, specially by the U.S.A., almost as a dogma, that India has no salvation outside of globalisation, outside capitalism and the market. This newly proclaimed economic dogma finds echo within India among the upper castes and classes who state, as is often done, that India has no future, no redemption if it does not join the chariot on the move to the economic paradise. Otherwise, it is said that we will be left behind in the limbo of

ignorance, or still worse condemned for ever into the hell-fire of destruction.

### **THE DECEPTIVE MANTLE**

Every temptation has its own glitter and fascination. What constitutes the fascination of globalisation in terms of process (apart from the personal attraction deriving from vested interests) is the fact that it appears to bring together peoples, countries, institutions, etc. In this sense, it enjoys certain respectability and furnishes very strong arguments to the defenders of present-day globalisation. Who can really counter a process of universality that brings about the unity of the world, of humanity? In fact, the modern capitalist process, the economic driving force behind globalisation, appears to integrate more and more people distant from one another in terms of geography, culture, language, religion, etc. With the production of goods globally linked, capital and finance too cross mountains and seas, societies and nations. The political and cultural borders become fluid. There is a grand global sweep of capitalism which seems to achieve what moral persuasion and other efforts to unite people transnationally have not achieved.

The deception is also in the aspect of speculation which capitalism has come to acquire. What is talked about is not production, value, exchange of goods, etc. Instead what is gaining ground is a fictitious economy which is nurtured by speculation on the financial capital, stocks, shares, etc. This is the second deceptive element it contains. Here, as in the world of imagination, economy grows without the poor 'growing' for the better, nations become rich without their poor ever becoming richer.

### **BEHIND APPEARANCES**

There is a Tamil proverb which says that "her hair is adorned by fragrant flowers, but if you look deep it is full of lice"! The fashionable and fascinating ideology of globalisation hides a host of evils which are best known by its victims. I need not go into them in detail here. But one or two elements stand out very clearly.

Globalisation seems to carry the whole world along. But in fact, it leaves more and more behind it in the desert of misery. It uproots people with the promise of plenty, but in fact it saps them mercilessly and allows them to dry out and die. The poor and the weak in our society are increasingly

deprived of the security their traditional occupations, however low and menial these may be, provide. They are incapable of competing in a system whose very nature is to leave behind many as it progresses. The agricultural sector has experienced the heaviest blow of globalisation.

Liberalisation is the policy by which a country becomes part of the global. And it has its own philosophy. An essential ingredient of this philosophy is that we cannot talk of distribution, social justice, economic rights and so on, without production, growth, increasing of wealth. But this purportedly very logical stance, hides the fact that most of the time what it produces is not what the poor and the weaker sections in our society desperately require to fulfil their basic needs. Impoverishment and misery is what liberalisation and globalisation bring to the poor in our society: in addition to being the oppressed, they become also the excluded. Globalisation for them in effect means marginalisation.

### **FAITH AND ECONOMY**

If the option for the poor and marginalised has any effective meaning, it needs to show itself in our stance in the face of the present economy — the liberal capitalist economy, which is the hub of the process of globalisation. No Christian can be a silent supporter of a system which excludes the poor and yet claims to opt for the poor. I say silent 'supporter' because our failure to take a stand amounts to support. We need to realise today that 'option for the poor' means necessarily also an option against an economic system that continues to create more and more victims.

In recent decades the cultural question has occupied the Indian Christian community which has directed its attention to making the faith 'inculturated'. There has been a certain amount of political activism on the part of individual Christians and groups in collaboration with others committed to the transformation of society. However, the economic question in its systemic aspect has not figured prominently in the Christian consciousness. The general pattern has been to take care of the victims through our welfare approach, or to work within the confines of the developmental ideology. There has been little effort to follow the development of the Indian economy and respond to it in terms of our commitment to the poor and the marginalised. Indian theology, unfortunately, has not taken up this question in any earnestness.

And yet the understanding of economy in its systemic aspect is very crucial for a faith that wants to be alive and responsive. If faith is not linked to this vital human question of economy, it loses its credibility. Faith that has nothing to say about life at its most primordial level of food, drink, land, shelter, safety, etc., cannot be life-giving. There is a scientific aspect to economy; it is evidently an object of science. However, economy cannot be reduced to science. Economy is basically a human question, and whatever there is of science needs to be viewed as a support to face the human question.

### **LIBERATION OF ECONOMY**

Precisely because economy is a human question it is also a very central theological issue today. The faith aspect of economy becomes evident if we reflect on the ultimate core of economy. Economy is a network of relationships between people employed in the production of goods and services, and in the process of exchange through commercialisation and enhancing relationships. Once the process of production, with the tools, capital, etc., involved, is objectified it can overpower and even do away with human relationships.

Globalisation precisely does this kind of mechanistic objectification in which the concern of human relationships seems to be positively excluded. If it is authentically human relationships among communities, groups, individuals (and not a mechanistic relationship of persons to objects-products, capital, etc.), it cannot but be just. Therefore to speak of a just economy would be a tautology. As the etymology of the word itself indicates, economy is a matter of ordering, governing matters at home (*oikos* + *nomos*). Precisely because the network of relationships that economy is expected to foster gets rent by mechanistic economic processes and mechanisms which dominate over the human, economy needs to be liberated today.

The first act of liberation of economy consists in creating an economy that truly liberates the poor and the weak in our society. For, it is in becoming truly an instrument to serve the poor and the marginalised that it regains its character of a human and humane enterprise. On the contrary, when it is directed to serve profit, the market, consumerism, etc., economy loses its inherent identity of being an instrument of inter-human relationships. What makes globalisation of economy seriously questionable from the human perspective is precisely its distortion into an instru-

ment of gain, profit, market, etc., and thus its being divorced from its humanistic objectives.

If economy is to be freed from the thralldom under which it is imprisoned now, the most important thing is to struggle for the democratisation of the economy. What is meant thereby is that economy needs to be restored as an activity where the people are free subjects in producing, exchanging, consuming, etc., and not simply the object of impersonal laws and imaginary processes and speculations with which they have nothing to do. Unfortunately the liberal economy running on the rails of industrial and financial capitalism is concerned about the free market and not about free people. It is a curious process by which people are economically imprisoned in order to make the market free. In fact, we see how the poor, the tribals, the farmers, and the fisher-folk feel helpless and no longer understand what is happening to them. Economic activities which have a considerable impact on their lives and their natural resources are conceived and set up without giving them the opportunity to intervene or to say a word about them.

### **FREEING THE AMBIGUOUS TECHNOLOGY**

We also need another liberation — liberation of technology. Modern industrial capitalism is unimaginable without technology. Technology, to say the least, is ambiguous. But the use of technological instruments should be ultimately to free human persons for higher and nobler pursuits. In other words, if part of the work is done by machines, it is for the well-being of humans so that they may become ever more free. But there is much more to be achieved before that. The basic freedom of human beings is ensured when they have their fundamental necessities of life met. To the extent technology is directed toward this purpose, namely to give life to human beings by mediating between the human and nature, it is truly humanised and liberated.

The present process of globalisation is a trend which exploits the ambiguous character of technology to turn it into an instrument which does not free the poor but strengthens their chains of slavery. It does this, first, by turning technology into an instrument for the generation of wealth that increases the power of the already powerful. In other words, technology is turned into a handmaid of the capital in whose company it keeps moving globally. Second, by over-exploiting nature and its resources for the purpose of quick profit, technology destroys the life-support system of nature on which the poor

depend very much, and thus becomes an instrument of slavery rather than of freedom.

## **GLOBALISATION AS AN ATTITUDE AND AS A WAY OF LIFE**

Admittedly, economy, technology, capital, market, etc. — all these constitute the linchpin of the process of Globalisation and liberalisation. However, globalisation is not a pure economic pursuit. It has its own consequences and implications in terms of attitude, way of life of the people. Without entering into any detailed description, let me highlight some of the attitudes and characteristics in terms of way of life.

### **GLOBALISATION AS A SUB-CULTURE**

The transnational movement of capital and the fluidity of markets across national borders has generated a kind of global sub-culture whose representatives in India are the ‘yuppies’. The basic attitude to life is shot through a crass pragmatism centred on money, consumer goods, career, etc. It is interesting to observe how among the students today in institutes of higher education the one-time political and social ideals for which they fought and even went on *dharnas* and fast are replaced by pragmatic considerations of competing for avenues with good prospects for money-making and career advancement. *The Hindu* of 22 January, 1995, has made a very revealing survey of this new attitude among the students in different parts of the country.

In terms of value, it has become important for this particular segment of Indian society to pay attention to style, fashion and so on. More than the goods themselves, what is important is the brand — symbol of social prestige. In our metropolitan cities, and in smaller towns too, this trend is on the increase. For the upper and middle classes life has become exciting with the availability of consumer goods which were once for them objects of their yearning and dreams. The temptation to acquire the new goodies goes hand in hand with the temptation for corruption and graft at the professional level. How else has one access to all types of modern consumer goods?

The new attitudes, values and way of life unleashed by globalisation and liberalisation seem to be diametrically opposed to the attitudes and values required for the cause of the liberation of those at the periphery. First of all, in a strongly stratified society with a deep-rooted caste system, the new

instruments, transnational connections, goods, services being enjoyed by the upper and middle classes go to re-inforce their attitude of superiority *vis-à-vis* the poor classes and castes. The idol of caste has found a very powerful consort in money. In the consciousness of the new *élite*, filled as it is with money-power and adoration of consumer goods, the poor and the marginalised become a ‘nuisance’, dispensable and if possible to be dispensed with. There is hardly an iota of solidarity with the suffering humans. What reigns supreme is the worst brand of individualism and self-seeking which wants to exclude and eliminate the weaker ones, the lower castes and classes. It is an ugly individualism soaked in and nourished by the caste system.

One of the worst consequences of globalisation in terms of attitude and values is a general dampening of social-consciousness in Indian society. The late 1960’s and particularly the 70’s and early 80’s was the period of a new surge of social activism, radicality and even militancy. It was during this period that many grassroots movements and even radical movements like the Naxalite emerged. Many young women and men of middle class from the urban milieu were seized by the ideal of constructing a casteless egalitarian society by contextual involvement in the rural areas. But today this constituency of middle class as a breeding ground for pioneers in social transformation has been gravely eroded by new attitudes and values governed by globalisation and liberalisation. Social ideals and idealism are being replaced by the philosophy of comfort, money, careerism and so on.

### **REMEDYING THE AMNESIA OF THE LOCAL**

In the face of these attitudes, values, way of life etc., it is necessary today to insist on the importance of the local and the contextual for the salvation and the liberation of the weaker ones in our society. Globalisation as it takes place today leads to amnesia — forgetfulness — of the local. The local is called upon to be sacrificed on the altar of the ‘global’ which, we are told, will be the sacrifice of our salvation.

Placing the local on centre stage is not against the spirit of universality. What we require is communication, solidarity among various local experiences, cultures, economies, traditions, utopias, etc. The forgetfulness of the local goes hand in hand with the forgetfulness to recognise legitimate pluralism. That is why against the onslaught of

globalisation we need to wave the flag of pluralism, made up of different hues and colours.

It is not enough to pay lip-service to cultural pluralism. The test of true cultural pluralism consists today in admitting also a plurality of economies as well as technologies, for the way of producing, distributing, consuming, etc. — of which economic activity is made up — is part of the culture of a people and closely linked to their natural environment. In other words, economy is a constitutive part of culture. But when culture is depleted of its economic genius — the particular way a people manage and maintain the resources of nature for human growth — it loses its vital sap. Then it is easy to drag peoples and nations into global economics. This progressively leads to the loss of the most noble aspects of their culture. All of them are supplied with a surrogate global culture, which ultimately serves the vested interests of the powerful.

The deeply rooted and internalised colonial attitudes in the Indian psyche of the upper and middle classes have turned them into easy agents of this type of globalisation to the great loss of the pluralism that has been so characteristic of our tradition. Our response to globalisation is then to seek ways and means at various levels to interrelate, communicate and share the riches of the languages, peoples, cultures of this country. For example, what effort do we take to learn the language of another State, attempt to understand the history and literature of another language? Does a Hindi speaking North Indian care to learn Tamil or Malayalam? Does a Tamilian or Keralite try to learn the literature of Telugu or Kannada? And yet what a mine of wealth each language, culture and people in this land contain. All this is forgotten, and our 'yuppies' are most at home in English, and pride themselves if they can speak American slang.

No nation, no people, no country can make progress on the basis of a borrowed identity. Globalisation is a process of losing our identity in its rich diversity. Therefore we need to find ways and means to strengthen the local, the regional, the contextual. True universality has meaning only among peoples, groups who are well-rooted in their culture and tradition. This rootedness is not simply a matter of culture and tradition alone. It is the foundation as well for a healthy all-round growth. I mean to say also economic growth. One way of standing up to the attitudes and values, and way of life fostered by globalisation is to initiate and strengthen communication among ourselves, the various peoples, cultures and traditions of this country.

This rootedness is a necessity for our genuine economic growth. It is this rootedness which will also open our eyes and make us see the actual situation of the poor and the marginalised. Even more, we need to be schooled in the universality of the poor. Their universality is true solidarity; it is a universality that transcends the little world of self-seeking, vested interests and crass individualism. One cannot but be struck by the sense of sharing, generosity, mutuality, out-reach to the other which the poor and the marginalised manifest in their daily lives. These are the seeds of true unity and universality, and not the globalisation of the rich and the powerful.

## **CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AND GLOBALISATION**

The prevailing process of globalisation is an occasion for Indian Christians to re-think their understanding of universality as it is given expression in different areas of ecclesial life. The temptation is very strong to pattern Christian universality on the model of globalisation. Whether we want it or not, in the perception of our countrymen and women, Christianity though apparently in the local soil, seems, however, to be bent outwards in the name of universality — like a coconut tree bent outwards and yielding its fruit elsewhere. Maybe it is a wrong impression. But it is our duty to examine whether our attitudes, values and way of life do not continue to convey this impression to our neighbours.

There cannot be true universality without deep local rooting. There are several areas of ecclesial life which we would need to examine. I am referring here just to one or two by way of example.

## **CONTEXTUAL ROOTS ENDANGERED**

Let us take the religious congregations. There are those who are proud to be international congregations. There are others which were born local and yet are all out to be global today by expanding their presence in other parts of the globe — especially in the affluent West. Standard arguments are put forward for these kinds of practices, most of which sound very universalistic in outlook. But we are forced to re-examine these practices and motivations when we are faced with certain situations. For example, when a religious sister, well-trained staff-nurse, is badly needed to take care of the poor



and the destitute in a village, she is taken away from them and is sent to look after a home for the aged in an affluent western country. This is apparently an expression of the universality of the congregation and its international character. But it is hard to see this 'universality' practised at the expense of the poor.

Similarly, rules and constitutions are framed manifestly from a universal and international point of view, but we are amazed that they have little to do with the local experiences and realities. Then again, young boys and girls are recruited for religious societies some of which are at the point of near extinction in the West. While the challenges to dedicated young women and men are plentiful in our society, it is difficult to see justification for this practice in the name of universality. Besides, it is not clear whether one is really helping the West by supplying vocations. If the religious life is no longer attractive to young western men and women, it is a serious question of self-examination for the western Churches to find out why this is happening. Whether a serious problem of faith within a de-christianising western society can be solved by supplying vocations from India in the name of universality is something to which we need earnestly to apply our mind.

### **MILKING THE GLOBALISATION**

More than ever before, the Church in India is called upon to be a Church of the poor, and stand in solidarity with the powerless and marginalised in our society. And yet, what we, unfortunately, find is that the values and attitudes connected with globalisation have made deep inroads into the consciousness of many of our Church-leaders, priests, religious, etc., even more than lay men and women. Money is becoming more and more a central value. Monetary calculations determine the choice of certain works, institutions, and make many of them studiously avoid certain other types of work in favour of the poor and the underprivileged. Everything gets measured according to credit or liability. The lure of money, personal comforts, modern gadgets, career, etc., characterise the life-style of many Church-related personnel, even as the 'option for the poor' is becoming a bad dream of yester-years. Global connections are cultivated to reap rich dividends, and the lure of money and accumulation is becoming irresistible. It is time now to awaken and see how far this enticing globalisation has taken us from our ideals.

### **CONCLUSION**

We started with the question whether there is no salvation outside of globalisation. Our foregoing reflections inevitably lead to the conclusion that if there is Salvation for our world today, especially its poor and weaker ones, it should be sought outside the process of globalisation.

Alternatives to globalisation can be evolved only when the economy which is the life-blood of globalisation as well as the technology attendant on it are liberated. Similarly the attitudes and values globalisation fosters need to be challenged by practices which promote a deep sense of pluralism, consciousness of the local and attentiveness to contextuality. It is from the poor and the marginalised we need to learn the lessons of authentic universality. Finally the Christian community itself needs to guard itself against the dangers of globalisation in the name of universality. It needs to regain its authentic universality by its rootedness in the soil and its commitment to the poor and the marginalised. Learning from the poor about genuine universality, the Church should engage itself in countering the attitudes and values fostered by globalisation and act in the company of all those who continue valiantly to withstand its lure for the sake of the poorest of the poor.

Ref. *Evntes - Digest*, Vol.29, no.3,  
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# LES “ENFANTS MÈRES” DE LA TRAGÉDIE

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Serge Arnold

*Elles ont entre 14 et 16 ans, parfois moins, ont été séparées de leurs parents durant la tragédie rwandaise de 1994 et, dans les camps de réfugiés de Tanzanie et du Zaïre, elles sont devenues des “enfants-mères” vouées au “désespoir d’un avenir précaire”.*

Le CICR indique qu’il est encore “difficile de mesurer l’étendue du problème sur l’ensemble des camps de réfugiés, comme il est difficile de définir les circonstances préluant à ces grossesses”, parfois des viols.

“Sans parents pour veiller sur elles, dans un univers de grande proximité, il est clair que ces jeunes filles sont vulnérables” note E. Twinch qui dirige l’Agence centrale de recherche du CICR, consacrée à la réunion des familles rwandaises éclatées.

Près de 100,000 enfants ont été séparés de leurs parents dans la tourmente de 1994, alors que le Rwanda était en proie aux massacres et à la guerre civile.

La victoire militaire de la rébellion de la minorité tutsie en juillet, qui a mis fin au génocide de plus de 500,000 tutsis et hutus libéraux, tués par les extrémistes de l’ethnie majoritaire, a provoqué l’exode panique de plus de deux millions de hutus dans les pays voisins du Rwanda.

En août 1994, le CICR, le Fonds des nations unies pour l’enfance (UNICEF), le Haut commissariat pour les réfugiés (HCR), la fédération internationale des sociétés de la Croix rouge et du croissant rouge, ont lancé “la plus vaste opération jamais mise en place depuis la seconde guerre mondiale pour réunir parents et enfants séparés”. Elle a mobilisé jusqu’à 48 organisations humanitaires.

## **Une entreprise de longue haleine**

95,000 enfants ont entrés dans la banque de données du CICR. 23,600 ont pu retrouver leurs parents. “Un tiers entre les camps et le Rwanda, un tiers d’un camp à un autre, un tiers dans un mouvement à l’intérieur du Rwanda”.

“44,000 petits rwandais demeurent sans nouvelles de leur famille et 36,000 parents s’efforcent de retrouver leurs petits”, note Elisabeth Twinch qui parle “d’une entreprise de longue haleine ayant pour cadre l’urgence”.

Parmi les 85,000 noms entrés dans la banque de données du CICR la trace de 10,000 enfants a été perdue, “nous devons savoir s’ils sont morts, s’ils ont rejoint une famille par leurs propres moyens ou s’ils ont changé d’endroits”, ajoute-t-elle.

L’opération est confrontée, deux ans après son lancement, à de nombreux problèmes.

Il y a le fait que beaucoup de parents et d’enfants ont “totalement perdu l’espoir de retrouver l’autre en vie” et ont donc abandonné les recherches.

Or, comme le note la responsable du CICR, “plus la séparation est longue plus difficile est la réunion ... L’enfant s’installe dans un univers délétère pour son équilibre et son avenir”.

Beaucoup d’enfants non accompagnés des camps ne veulent tout simplement plus retourner dans leur pays ou leur famille.

C’est selon le CICR le cas de 85% des enfants non accompagnés des camps de Ngara en Tanzanie qui abritent toujours plus de 400,000 réfugiés hutus.

“Le problème, indique Elisabeth Twinch, est généralisé dans les camps bordant la frontière rwandaise. Ces enfants ont connu le Rwanda du Génocide, le traumatisme est réel”.

De plus, ces enfants ont “recréé dans les camps leur univers, avec leurs amis, leurs référents sécurisants” et, note encore Elisabeth Twinch, “nous ne pouvons nier l’existence de pressions sur ces enfants”.

Le régime de Kigali dominé par les anciens rebelles tutsis du Front patriotique rwandais (FPR) accuse les extrémistes hutus d’empêcher le retour des réfugiés hutus, qui, deux ans après le génocide, sont encore près de 1,6 million dans les camps du Zaïre et de Tanzanie.

Ref. *Service d’information*, Togo,  
No.52, Septembre 1996.