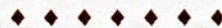


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TALES OF THE HASIDIM

An old rabbi once asked his pupils how they could tell when the night had ended and the day had begun.
“Could it be”, asked one of the students, “when you can see an animal in the distance and tell whether it’s a sheep or a dog”?
“No”, answered the rabbi.
Another asked, “Is it when you can look at a tree in the distance and tell whether it’s a fig tree or a peach tree”?
“No,” answered the rabbi
“Then when is it”? the pupils demanded.
“It is when you can look on the face of any man or woman and see that it is your sister or brother
Because if you cannot see this, it is still night”.

From a Group

SEDOS RESIDENTIAL SEMINAR 1997

OUR RESOURCE PERSONS

IAN LINDEN, London

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SAMUEL RAYAN, SJ

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*1946-48 and 1950-52 he taught in a school in Keralam. 1960-72, he served as Chaplain to the Kerala Sector of the **All India Catholic University Federation (AICUF)**; since 1972 he has been on the **Faculty of Theology of Vidyajyoti, Delhi**, of which he was principal 1972-76. He continues to teach theology in the Regional Theology centre in Keralam.*

*1968-83 he was one of the Catholic Members of the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches. He continues to work in the Field of Ecumenism, and with the W.C.C. He was the First Principal of the Indian School of Ecumenical Theology, Bangalore. He is a member, since 1979, of the **Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT)**. A member since 1976 of the **Indian Theological Association (ITA)**; and sectional editor, 1971-96, of Jeevadhara, a journal of theology.*

Rayan writes in Malayalam and English and has published numerous Articles in Books and Periodicals in India and Outside. Among his published works are: The Holy Spirit (New York: Orbis, 1978); Breath of Fire (London: Chapman, 1979; Translated into Dutch and Spanish); The Anger of God (Bombay, Build, 1982); In Christ: The Power of Women (Madras: All India Christian Women's Association, 1986); Spirituality for Leadership (Hongkong: YMCA, 1989).

IDOLS IN HYPERSPACE: THE JANUS-FACE OF CAPITALISM

Ian Linden

Catholic Institute for International Relations

*The glue of the crimp-seal around the dog
gave way easily with a soft hiss... I
noticed the maker's label sewn into the
body-seam: **Fullalove**. And on the reverse:
"Eternitoys (Div of Jaykay Group),
Vallance House, Vallance, Sleaford.
Upkeep: minimal. Shelf-life: eternal".*

Gordon Burn, **Fullalove**, Minerva 1996, 128.

The time of advanced capitalism in which we live is one of striking contradictions. On the one hand, it is spawning ethnic nationalisms, forms of religious fundamentalism and exclusive identities that create and consolidate boundaries. On the other, it is characterised by an information and communications revolution, the unregulated flow of capital, globalised forms of production, and the pursuit of free trade, each of which challenge and break down boundaries. A movement towards universalism and globalisation contends with a movement towards plurality and particularism.

Moreover, in the complex layering of our world the prevailing currents appear to move in different directions. The political and social is played out increasingly as a clash of particularisms, interest groups and ethnic nationalisms one against the other, whilst it is now commonplace to say that the terrain of the economic is global. Focus on the concept of globalisation, — the term is confusingly used with a variety of contemporary meanings — weights analysis against a full understanding of particularism, and fragmentation, and suggests that these forces are of little significance. So, in many ways, as the dominant idea of our time "globalisation", with its resonant suggestions of interdependence and world community, has an ideological feel to it, obscuring as much as it reveals.

Globalisation: ideology or reality?

“We will do our best”, the 1989 Toyota Annual Report proclaims, “to bring the

world together by building up the global auto-industry”. That is what we are supposed to believe. Many people do believe that globalisation is a description of a quantum jump in international trade and that it is self-evidently a good thing. International trade has, of course, changed over the years, from large standardised products like sugar, wheat, wool and textiles moved by shipping in the 1920's, to the vast array and much greater volume of goods and services of the 1990's. However, the percentage contribution of international trade in merchandise to countries' overall productive wealth, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), is today much the same as it was before the First World War. And while in the industrialised countries trade is playing a growing part in economic growth, the share of trade of the world's 48 least developed countries (LDCs) has dropped by one half since the 1980's to only 0.4 per cent.

It is not trade in merchandise that has undergone a quantum jump in the last two decades but the movement of money, or, at least, the movement of what money signifies in the hyperspace of communications technology. The daily turnover of currency transactions in the money markets during the 1970's was about \$1 billion. It is now well above \$1 trillion, 100 times more than Governments' currency reserves. Unlike the 1970's when only 10 per cent of these flows represented currency speculation, today this forms some 90 per cent of currency movements.

Since the 1980's the flow of the remaining 10 per cent has had a fast growing component of foreign

direct investment (FDI), — exported capital moving across nation-State boundaries not as loans or investment in company shares but as direct ownership. It has risen four times to reach \$220 billion in 1994, while exported goods and services have increased by only one half. This might, at first glance, represent an effective means of redistribution from capital-rich to capital-poor countries, but this is far from reality. Flows to the least developed countries — and these would include most of sub-Saharan Africa — are negligible. Not surprisingly 90 per cent moves between the richer industrialised countries or to and from the Asian Tigers and Southern China. Up to half of this is mergers and acquisitions of already existing factories and companies not new investment in productive assets.

So the unique feature of globalisation is a further major step in distancing money from production and exchange and turning it into a fetish. Money has moved a stage further away from its instrumental purpose to facilitate market exchange to become an idol inhabiting hyperspace, a tawdry one at that, incarnate as the chips in an international currency casino employing hundreds of thousands of people. One of the principal reasons that Britain will probably be forced to join any European Monetary Union, is that the failure to do so may cost thousands of jobs in the City. Britain's economic development, skewed by empire and dominions into the over-development of financial "services", is particularly vulnerable to challenges from rival financial centres like Frankfurt.

Thus while globalisation has taken on the aura of a modern, secular version of the Victorian theme of Christianity and Commerce — read free trade and good governance — it is characterised in reality by a perennial feature of the dynamics of capitalism: the creation of wealth in association with the generation of poverty, suffering, and inequality. The recent Uruguay round of the GATT (General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs), for example, will supposedly create \$213 billion in new wealth around the world from trade liberalisation. But of this, \$142 billion will go to the rich North, \$58 billion to China and "upper income" Asia, with only \$13 billion for the rest. Most of the rest will go to Latin America with Africa lucky to see \$2 billion. In the last 30 years the gap between the richest 20 per cent of the world and the poorest 20 per cent has doubled. So from the perspective of the poor, globalisation represents the acceleration of the destructive features of advanced capitalism.

The second diagnostic feature of this system is the degree to which production has become international. From cars to dresses the productive process is spread across several nation-State boundaries and, in the main, controlled by 100 or so vast transnational corporations (TNCs). The trading network of the TNCs is normally thought and spoken of as global though increasingly, in order to deal with freight costs, and ensure that chains of suppliers are advantageously placed, regional, or even local. The "outsourcing" of production to local suppliers has perhaps gone the furthest in companies like Toyota which undertakes only 15% of production, the rest being placed with suppliers locked in to the vast parent company. Even a company like Shell has 80 per cent of its operations in the European Union. The famous Ford Mondeo "world car", in fact, is made and marketed in the USA and Europe. The service sector that relies on the — easier — transfer of information technology is less constrained in this way.

Since the movement of labour is limited by a variety of factors, often political, and that of footloose capital is not, the TNCs have a growing power as global employers to select sites of production to minimise environmental, social and labour costs, but most particularly to get the best inducements from Governments. This is not unlimited power as nation-State Governments can legislate to limit it, and the supply of skilled labour for the more advanced productive processes has proved a "natural" brake. Unfortunately, in practice, nation-State Governments compete with each other to offer ever larger incentives for new transnational FDI, thereby throwing away their negotiating power and beggaring their neighbour. The control of 70 per cent of world trade and much production within the large transnationals and their "outsourced" suppliers, with "transfer pricing" to low taxation countries, makes the term "free trade" another of the great obfuscations of our time.

This state of economic affairs is presented by many Governments as outside their control, somehow beyond human agency, while in reality it has been created by decisions to deregulate currency markets, place no brake on incentives, back away from controls on transnationals, and constrain labour movement through immigration and other indirect controls. Regulation of currency markets, for example, in the form of taxes on currency transactions, the Tobin Tax, would be difficult to implement but far from impossible. Likewise for

regulation of *de facto* regional and international cartels and monopolies.

De-regulation is taken as a lynchpin of neo-liberalism and presented as though it were, in economic terms, equivalent to a return to the precepts of natural law with “market distortion” the equivalent of original sin. De-regulation is seen as a natural consequence of a belief in freedom, and freedom and choice as the dominant value of the system. Fukuyama even claims that history has ended with the universal victory of today’s political economy, liberal capitalism, as if the contradictions within it were of no consequence.

They are, of course, more relevant than appears at first sight. As Fukuyama implies, advanced capitalism is a political economy, in other words it operates best within particular social and political conditions and parameters. Democracy, an independent judiciary, an entrepreneurial class, good governance, all are seen to be integral to the system by those who promote liberal capitalism globally as a political and economic project. But these systemic features of advanced capitalism are absent in much of the world, where the social and political vary in relation to the economic from the dysfunctional to the disastrous.

The Janus Face

As a system, therefore, advanced capitalism defines what it means to be a human being in contradictory ways. On the one hand, people in liberal democracies are citizens with universal human rights. Indeed, the struggle for a universal franchise made the marking of a ballot paper into a symbol of an universal humanity. Elections may be, or may become, a purely formal process, but it need not be so, as anyone who watched Black South Africans vote for the first time in 1994 can affirm.

Those who vote illustrate how, in this instance, the system requires free subjects, both in the philosophical sense of rational decision-makers rather than robots, and in the constitutional sense, and thereby acknowledges that we are men and women with inalienable political rights. Black people in Britain, for example, however discriminated against in economic and social life, will not be noted down as they vote so that piles of their ballots may be placed separately and discounted by presiding officers, or, as in the imperfect capitalism of *apartheid* South Africa, not permitted

to vote at all. Formal democracy under a universal franchise is premised on citizens as adult, autonomous subjects who are not differentiated. This, it hardly needs saying, is not the premise behind the marketing of goods.

Aujourd’hui...

nous nous sentons prêts à retourner au milieu du peuple particulier qui est notre terre de mission. C’est un peuple loin d’être parfait, il a sa dose d’égoïsme, d’exclusion, de jalousies individuelles et sociales.

Cependant, c’est un peuple sacré et nous voulons:

- **affiner notre regard pour lire et contempler ses multiples expressions culturelles, marques de Dieu dans son histoire,**
- **affiner notre odorat pour goûter les subtils parfums qu’il répand dans notre univers,**
- **affiner notre ouïe pour entendre les chants et les souffrances qui le traversent,**
- **affiner notre langage pour savoir dire la parole qui fera question et pour savoir nous taire.**

Nous retrousserons nos manches pour vivre les résistances contre l’oppression, avec les démunis; pour construire ensemble une Théologie de la

Bonne Nouvelle qui saura interpeller les lourdeurs à convertir.

Ce peuple comme celui de l'Ancien Testament est en marche vers la Libération en Jésus-Christ.

Nous comptons sur l'Esprit-Saint pour l'aider à s'ouvrir de plus en plus à l'universalité.

Likewise the law courts of advanced capitalist States require free subjects sharing universalised — or universalisable — norms and rules. The legal system in Britain depends on citizens performing jury service — at least until now — and for their verdicts not to be determined by arbitrary and particular likes and dislikes, or by anything other than their rational judgement and the evidence. Judges and magistrates are challenged when their verdicts are egregiously prejudiced. This is not to say that in practice both juries, magistrates and judges sometimes fail miserably to be the “rational man and woman” that they are required to be for the law. And that these failures will not be particularly likely in cases in which some form of particularism, ethnicity or nationalism, is involved. After all, the gross miscarriages of justice of the 1970's in the UK were characterised by obvious prejudice against Irish people.

The point is not that advanced capitalism ensures that genuine justice and democracy prevail — it clearly does not — but that certain of its key institutions work on the premise that they should. These institutions require human beings to behave in a rational — post-enlightenment — way as moral beings.

So, in important instances, and as part of a broad framework for economic exchanges, advanced capitalism supports the market with key institutions based on universal values. It is vitally concerned with rule-based frameworks for the smooth conduct of the market. Indeed, investment capital will not flow into countries that lack them, unless, as in China, corruption is matched by quick profits and access to a significant domestic market. Marx never underestimated the advance that the capitalist system represented over pre-capitalist formations and their

despotic, arbitrary power relations, just as he never underestimated the exploitation and human misery it entailed.

However, at this stage of capitalist production the market does not, in other key respects, require free subjects capable of rational decisions, i.e. universal, post-enlightenment men and women. It needs a plethora of differentiated **consumers**. Moreover the triumph of modern capitalism has hinged precisely on being able to segment and differentiate groups of consumers and then to supply them at a profit: babywear, records and CDs for adolescents, clothes for the older woman, “lefty” films for “lefty” filmgoers, designer drugs, slimming diets, then health foods, ethnic foods, package holidays, eco-tourism, the capacity of the system to differentiate human tastes, desires, likes and dislikes, seems almost limitless. Look at the “interest groups” represented by the different magazines on sale, the different types of bread on sale in a German bakery, the recent expansion of sport, sportswear and shoes.

Market response to consumer preference is virtually instant in supermarket chains as information from the checkout is processed. But the market is increasingly “sensitive”. If Adam Smith's hidden hand does not reach for certain types of merchandise, it is removed from the high street shop. If the price of tin falls like a stone in Bolivia people start growing coca. If people buy “Green” products, the super-markets will stock them.

The consumer is not defined as rational man and woman. Indeed consumer behaviour is studied with the intensity of zoologists watching the world's last apes. Behaviourists watch, study and then plan how stores are designed. Men rush in and out of stores feeling uncomfortable about shopping for clothes, so ties are placed on shirts for them to “impulse” buy. Sweets and items attractive to children are placed at a low-level near check-outs, but women learn to avoid aisles with this hazard. Advertisements play on fantasies and insecurities. Heinz trades on nostalgia for the organic family and retains its market share despite selling beans at higher prices than its rivals.

This is a world where human beings are defined as empty vessels bearing an intermittent and shifting spectrum of desires and appetites. The only universals of relevance are a tiny cluster of brand names. As Terry Eagleton says: “In these sectors, plurality, desire, fragmentation and the rest are as native to the way we live as coal was to Newcastle before Margaret Thatcher got her hands on it”.

Indeed, the market might function perfectly well with mindless, but suggestible, robots provided they represented a vast and evolving range of particular appetites and desires, and bought what they were told by the advertisers, and thereby made profits for companies and their shareholders. Eagleton in his recent **Illusions of Post-Modernism** brilliantly describes the fit between the philosophy that permeates this world and the political economy of liberal capitalism today. He illustrates in post-modernist theory the echoes of the disappearance of the universal, autonomous subject in favour of the ephemeral bearer of consumer desires, and the fragmentation of the cultural, social and political world. Ironically it is only the 20 per cent of society in the developed nations who, through poverty, are obliged to buy the cheapest food and goods who have to be rational consumers, taking decisions purely on price.

Resistance and Mission

Work for justice and peace has to take account of these contradictions in the contemporary economic system, and play on them, if it is not to miss the available points of leverage. It has to share some of Marx's clarity — though not necessarily his judgements — about what needs to be left behind and what cherished in the inevitable process of change. So a basic task of the Church's mission is to develop in people their capacity to name, denounce and resist the multiple losses entailed in the processes that dehumanise in advanced capitalism, while nurturing those that open up genuine human choices. None of this is possible without some shared sense of the values and the virtues that will be required to follow this prophetic path.

But shared values are exactly what post-modernism calls in question with its emphasis on how different cultures cannot communicate between themselves. Advanced capitalism is in the business of differentiating people as consumers in every way possible, and is more than happy with competing sub-cultures. In the process values become re-imagined as "styles". Thus people do not live virtuous or wicked lives, are not destructively selfish or live a lifetime of solidarity — such language is "judgemental". They have "life-styles".

What is meant by "life-style" now encompasses what otherwise would be called moral choices. Today these choices are increasingly described in

relative terms of appropriateness or inappropriateness. What exactly is meant though? The problem with this use of words is that kicking beggars to death, sexual harassment and wearing a Celtic scarf in a group of Rangers supporters might all be described as "inappropriate behaviour". It is as if the idea of "bad manners" of Victorian society had moved on from its class-dominated world into the fragmented groupings of post-modern society, losing on the way a Victorian sense of the virtues.

The system is comfortable with value-systems being reduced to "styles", fragmented and unable to communicate successfully about ethical concerns provided "business ethics" — or the firing squad — sustains enough of a rule-based framework for trade and investment. That is why the so-called transition in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union initially presented a central moral issue for the Churches, not the sudden and appalling immiseration of the poor, or even crime, but "business ethics".

Against this background, the most obvious avenue of resistance has been to concentrate on the redefinition of the **consumer and of business ethics**. The transformation of the consumer into a free moral subject, in other words the rehumanisation and liberation of the consumer, creates a systemic problem for advanced capitalism. Ethical investment, pensions, purchasing and trade, shareholder action, lobbying for monitored codes of conduct, touch the system at its most market sensitive, and widen the concept of business ethics.

If enough people make ethical demands, the market will respond first by differentiating them into "ethical life-style" consumers — the process has already begun — and then corporate behaviour will be modified in the social and environmental spheres to incorporate the new consumer "desires". CIIR, the British TUC and the World Development Movement have been negotiating with the big transnational toy buyers about a code of conduct for Asian toy factories and how to monitor it. The impact of public campaigns on marketing is evident with some of the big oil companies. Already Tradecraft and the Fairtrade mark have managed to get several products into supermarkets, and the Body Shop, Premier Beveridges and the Co-op Bank have moved commercially into the ethical market niche.

More difficult to date has been resistance at the other end of the contradiction, dealing with globalisation by promoting the re-localisation of economies and community control of capital. Credit

unions, co-operatives, small scale income generating projects all face daunting problems in the context of concentrated economic power in the “globalised” economy. For, of course, it was the corporate world that acted locally and thought globally long before development and Church agencies and thus has a headstart. But there is much potential for creative action here, and the development agencies have built up their expertise in this area over the years.

The problem is that the marketing manager has staked out the terrain before the Church worker and can call on far greater resources. So today’s liberation struggle on a global canvas is not so much a question of making gains but of stopping losses. Among the irreversible losses attendant on “globalisation” that must be fought before it is too late are the loss of language, art and music, song and poetry, the social and spiritual meanings that have sustained people, let alone their capacity to control their lives in a community and to make a living. Some of these goals have been amongst the pre-occupations of Churches and Non-Governmental Development Agencies fighting a rearguard action on the margins. They are the substance of cultures that can be open to the future and to others, the contents of a healthy pluralism, but they can also be manipulated to sustain imagined, exclusive and violent forms of particularism.

To describe the formation and sustaining of such inclusive cultures as involving a liberation struggle is to suggest a critique of globalisation in the context of liberation theology. Indeed, taking on these contradictions in advanced capitalism is a necessary new dimension in the evolution of liberation theology’s thinking and practice. The Vatican believes, of course, that it has slain the dragon of liberation theology and has now moved on to the next — Asian — dragon, “cultural relativism”. It has not, of course; liberation theology has permeated the spiritual bloodstream of the Churches. It may be that only a more thoroughgoing analysis of advanced capitalism coupled with the vision of a renewed liberation theology will show how, when it comes to culture, the Vatican yet again may be missing the mark.

Today’s cultural relativism is a derivative of advanced capitalism and post-modernist philosophy, a symptom as much as a cause, and needs to be seen in this context. It may be in need of the Church’s reflection and wisdom, but this is hardly a first priority. Cultural relativism is an understandable, but wrong, response to the pathology of particularism

that thrives on exclusive identities and incommensurable cultures. But there is a difference between cultural relativism and a healthy pluralism, just as there is a difference between an arrogant imperialism and a discriminating and understanding appraisal of cultures, including those of the rich industrialised North and of the Churches, in the light of the Gospel.

The new problem for faith today is not cultural relativism but the corrosive dynamics within advanced capitalism ready to relativise and instrumentalise values in order to sell beans, hamburgers and Coca-Cola, and to marginalise and exclude millions of the world’s population from participation in a global economy, as profits perennially come before people. The problem is not that the divinity of Jesus Christ is being denied in a reaching out to others’ religions, but that the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth is being denied by the worship of the money-idol in hyperspace and through the countless sacrifices that are made on its behalf.

People around the world need both a meaningful life and enough to eat. Our time of advanced capitalism is offering one billion of them neither, treating them as part of the collateral damage of global economic growth. A faith that is not pre-occupied with this fundamental question of people made disposable, above all other priorities, deserves to be relegated to the margins as a “religious life-style”.

LAY SPIRITUALITY IN A POST-MODERN WORLD

Ian Linden

Catholic Institute for International Relations

“Each tradition will have its own techniques of watchfulness, its own criteria for the purification of desire and for weaning adoration from idolatry”. Nicholas Lash in **The Beginning and the End of Religion**.

The title of this talk obscures more of its content than it highlights. To begin with, traditionally the word “lay” has taken on its meaning only in distinction to “clerical”, and this distinction has often been read as “amateur” as against “professional”, beginner as against expert. While we often need to define ourselves in opposition to something that we are not, how people are differentiated and express their identity depends on the context and has some, at least implicit, purpose.

For example, when I was working in the anti-*apartheid* struggle it was sometimes years before I found out if a colleague in South Africa was, for example, a Baptist, a Muslim, a Catholic or a Communist. The relevant question was “whose side are you on?” — and it was wise to find out early in a relationship. It is the nature of the common task that determines which are the important and unimportant differences between people, and what aspects of our identity are significant. Are Christians engaged on a mission in which the distinction between lay and clerical is important? Is to “seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God”, as the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, n. 31, describes it, a mission for the laity alone? How can this be if, as *Vita Consecrata* insists, the option for the poor is “inherent in the very structure of love lived in Christ” and “all of Christ’s disciples are therefore held to this option”? (The Consecrated Life and its Mission in the Church and in the World *Vita Consecrata*, n. 82).

In addition, the word “spirituality” is a huge inflatable castle of a word. On further inspection, like a lot of words that originate in French with certain rich resonances, in English *spiritualité* can evoke a sense of plastic emptiness. Popular modern books on spirituality, and their metastasis as sunshine-through-the-leaves posters in religious

houses and pastoral centres, do not suggest that we are dealing with faith seeking knowledge, but potted psychology, not so much an opium for the people, more some talcum powder for the sores and abrasions of modern life. If Christian spirituality is defined simply — for example as “Christian wisdom and perspective on faith and life for our world”, where are we to find the wisdom, the theology, in much of what passes for spirituality in Catholic bookshops?

No less inflated a word is the term “post-modern society”. My suspicion does not stem from the fact that only a few people would describe their social experience in this fashion. Does it matter if few people immediately and directly register the atomisation and fragmentation of society, the collapse of grand narratives, or the reality of cultural relativism, as being key features of our contemporary world? The world under our feet today is not, of course, the same as the world in our heads. But this has been true throughout history as each generation tries to interpret their human condition.

The substantive point is to what extent is post-modern society as a description of contemporary global society an accurate philosophical construct, a useful interpretation of who we are as human beings and of the world in which we live? Perhaps it might fit Western Europe in the late 1990’s. But our global reality seems a lot more complex, a jostling juxtaposition of the different pre-modern, differentiated forms of modernity and post-modern, a temporal patchwork. Whether or not there is an overall trajectory, and it is in the direction of the post-modern dissolution, remains to be seen.

Discipleship

To explain why I was initially happy with the title means going back 30 years to when I first read Yves Congar’s **Lay People in the Church** and got accustomed to the idea of there being a “lay spirituality”. He begins his chapter on spirituality, “In the World but not of the World”, by conceding that strictly speaking there is no “spirituality of the

diocesan clergy” or “spirituality of the laity”. There is one spirituality, the Christian quest to seek union with God in Christ and so “to tend to holiness” (Y. Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, Geoffrey Chapman, 1965, 400).

This use of “lay spirituality” without inverted commas, he insists, is so that “those to whom the word is familiar and clear may know that our purpose is to talk about the things they understand by that word: in what particular conditions do lay people have to sanctify themselves?” (ibid.). We are all used to that question being “familiar and clear”, but it is easy to forget how revolutionary it was in its day.

There is also considerable continuity with tradition in Congar’s book. His common-sense, concrete approach rests on a legacy of something more than convenience. It arises out of a tradition of institutional arrangements in the Church expressed by him as “forms of life” which he goes on to describe as “vocations”. “Their vocations are diverse, their states and conditions of life are diverse, their actual duties are diverse”, he writes (ibid.). This all seems to make up a coherent discourse, with echoes of St Paul’s different charisms, and to be uncontentious as a statement about the sociology of how the contemporary Church is structured.

But, as Vocations Sunday comes round and sermons fall apart trying to make it clear that the primary purpose of the day is to encourage recruitment for the consecrated life and diocesan priesthood, but, shuffle, shuffle, that those of us then confusingly called “the laity” also have a vocation to sanctity, something more weighty is glimpsed as at stake. As *Vita Consecrata* makes clear we are dealing with something more than a sociology of the contemporary Church; the two different forms of life, the consecrated life and lay life, plus the ordained ministry, are “in accordance with the plan of the Lord Jesus”; they are “paradigmatic” (*Vita Consecrata* n. 31).

As Congar describes it, traditionally only two of these vocations are understood as requiring people to live the Christian life “more intensely”, and to make a priority of the spiritual journey that all Christians

are called to undertake (*Lay People*, p. 401). And the “objective superiority” of the consecrated life as “a way of showing forth the Church’s holiness”, in *Vita Consecrata*, n. 32, objectively becomes conflated with a hierarchical structuring of the Church, as, through the imposition of celibacy, there is created a bogus approximation of clerical life to monastic life. A spirituality in which, in practice, diocesan clergy attempt to behave like *ersatz* monks, and lay workers try to behave like *ersatz* diocesan priests, appears today spectacularly at odds with the new demands coming from pastoral action and collaborative ministry. Congar in his day was part of a revolutionary process of freeing the laity from an ecclesiastical prison, but he — and we — despite the clear ecclesiology of *Lumen Gentium*, still have not fully dismantled the clericalist pre-suppositions into which the prison walls sank their foundations.

Nonetheless, Congar, Lebreton and the French theologians of the 1960’s, who so informed the Second Vatican Council’s thinking, opened up a new vista for Catholics who wanted to relate faith to life. Karl Rahner called for the Church to give greater support to those who dealt daily with the problems of an increasingly secular Europe and saw clearly the demands that would be made on any lay spirituality (K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations Volume Five*, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966, pp. 152-3).

The idea that the sacrament of marriage put Christians in a special “state”, characterised by each spouse being the primary channel of grace for the other, was an exciting one, even if it placed an enormous responsibility on a single relationship. Married spirituality was a classic elaboration of Congar’s vision of lay spirituality, related to a form of life or “state”. It was liberating in a Church in which a celibate clergy had more often than not passed on an alien “monastic” spirituality — imposed on them — onto married people, at times inadvertently causing untold suffering. But marriage remained a central experience of Catholic life mainly abandoned by academic theologians as an object of reflection, and prey to the manic contrivances of the canon lawyers.

If Christian spirituality is defined simply — for example as “Christian wisdom and perspective on faith and life for our world”, where are we to find the wisdom, the theology, in much of what passes for spirituality in Catholic bookshops?

The problem with all these “states” with their attendant grace was their static, bounded qualities, which tended under the intense scrutiny of new forms of spiritual formation to turn people in on themselves and their relationships. Spirituality was easily reduced to a form of psychological hygiene with a pantehnikon of methods and techniques drawn from popular psychology. This had the merit of winnowing motivations and prejudices by applying the see-judge-act approach to oneself. But it smacked of a spirituality which understood itself as dealing with what Nicholas Lash calls “the ‘inside’ of Cartesian man, the opinions, dreams and preferences of the private self” (N. Lash, “The Church in the State We’re In” *Modern Theology* 13, 1997, 123).

Christians are not in the habit of going around imagining themselves as divinely defined parts of an organic mediaeval christendom, working out their sanctification in terms of their allotted timeless boundaries and forms of life. Such a mediaeval fantasy was at best a neo-Gothic dream, at worst a prelude to a Fascist nightmare. In the heady optimism of the 1960’s, many Christians were available for a more open ended journey. Indeed, the French title of Congar’s book, *Jalons pour une theologie du laicat*, suggested new, uncharted territory. The word that first comes to mind to describe journey is not “vocation”, with its institutional slotting into a bounded sociological role, but **discipleship** — where you learn what to do as you go along. Discipleship suggests Congar’s surveying of uncharted territory, a sense of risk, not knowing where you will end up, not knowing who you will become. With Bonhoeffer, of course, it suggested a radical break with the past and an incalculable cost (D. Bonhoeffer *The Cost of Discipleship*, SCM Press, 1959). It is telling that when *Vita Consecrata* talks of the option for the poor it immediately begins to talk about “all of Christ’s **disciples**” (*Vita Consecrata* n. 82).

Discipleship is a form of apprenticeship, a learning by doing, or by watching someone-else-doing. So it is not surprising that as the Second Vatican Council unleashed Christians and gave them permission for an uncharted discipleship unstructured by an institutional control of “vocations”, an opposition perceived as being

between “experience” and “dogma” came to the fore. The “processing” of experience through apprenticeship in the context of the Church’s living and unfolding tradition simply was not on offer. The pastoral experience arising out of the creative excitement of the 1960’s did not match easily with a dogmatic and hierarchical response to the “world”.

In the metaphor of being sent out into the “world”, who was doing the sending? It was easy to reply Christ and the Church but, as pastoral experience diverged from dogmatic assertion and hierarchical discipline, this could begin to appear as an “either-or” question.

What broadly distinguished pastoral experience from what might be called the dominant perspective on spirituality was that one was by definition incarnate and the other, by historical accident, presented and expressed as disincarnate. While a disincarnate spirituality might not result in an immediate crisis of faith for some in the consecrated life, — for some of course it did — it simply did not work for the vast majority who had gone on a different journey. Many of these therefore completed that journey in an increasingly dis-integrated state with faith, prayer and life falling apart, or with faith and prayer un-nurtured by the Church and slowly withering. Not suprisingly, simply stated, many gave up on the Church.

Liberation Theology

It was the special contribution of Latin American liberation theology to the life of the Church after the Council to offer a way out of a disincarnate spirituality that, for many people, did not enable them to build an adequate bridge between faith and life, and to offer an alternative to the charismatic and other lay movements. In short, it provided an underpinning for a renewed Christian spirituality by returning to a concrete scriptural christology which had, on the whole, disappeared from “devotional” writing after the Middle Ages (Ignatian spirituality would be an important exception). It did so by first of all showing how

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religious language was shaped by power interests, and by demythologising pietistic spirituality.

This enabled theology and spirituality to be linked again in a popular Christianity that opened up discipleship as a focused option, an option for the poor. For some of the Latin American liberation theologians and, in the case of the South African Dominican, Albert Nolan's **Jesus before Christianity**, it renewed the quest for an historical Jesus accessible to a secular world seeking justice (A. Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity*, David Philip, Johannesburg 1976).

Thus through the impact of the ideas of liberation theology in the 1970's, which grew from the faith of the poor, the basic commitment and orientation of the Christian way of life for at first radical Catholics, then as it entered the bloodstream of the wider Church for many more, came to be expressed as "the option for the poor". This, of course, originally meant first and foremost the engagement of the poor in their own personal, socio-economic and political liberation. But it came to mean the religious commitment and evangelical bias of all those who take the side of the poor in their quest for integral human liberation. For, in the eyes of faith it is God's own option. This is why the standpoint of the poor is theologically privileged; in other words the poor are best placed to discover and contemplate God's hidden presence in the world.

Indeed, the starting point for the thinking of the Peruvian theologian, Gustavo Gutierrez, was precisely the disjunction between the Christian message and an experienced reality, that of the Latin American poor. "How is it possible to tell the poor, who are forced to live in conditions that embody a denial of love, that God loves them?" His implied answer was that this message would be a lie if God's love, and thus the Christian Gospel, were disincarnate, not about changing the world of the poor economically, socially and politically.

If I might add a personal note at this point, for me liberation theology came just in time. In as much as I ever felt the tug of a "follow me", it came from people like a Breton priest in an Emmaus community of Abbe Pierre, from Christians who risked their lives for justice in Rhodesia and South Africa, and did not come from out of the **mysterium tremendens** of bells and smells in Westminster Cathedral. My first love for the Church came when I glimpsed in it a school of solidarity with the poor. I have always resented the term "social catholicism"

because it never occurred to me that catholicism could be anything other than social.

Indeed I cannot imagine that I would be standing addressing a forum of this nature had liberation theology not come along in the early 1970's, entered the bloodstream of even European Christian spirituality, and nourished a faltering faith. As the ever evolving answer to Gustavo's question, it was also the beginning of an answer to many stultifying dilemmas caused by the lack of a usable link between

L'icona del buon Pastore ha accompagnato e ispirato la preghiera e la riflessione del gruppo. Come missionari essa ci ricorda:

- **La centralità di Cristo Buon Pastore continua a guidare il suo gregge; da qui scaturisce per il missionario l'esigenza d'umiltà e di fiducia.**
- **L'autentica solidarietà con il gregge; il destino del gregge è il destino del missionario. Gli atteggiamenti fondamentali che ne derivano per il missionario sono: conoscenza, ascolto, vicinanza, empatia, rispetto...**
- **La totale disponibilità del missionario che può andare fino al sacrificio della vita.**
- **La vigilanza del Pastore per il gregge; anche il missionario deve essere**

atteso ai bisogni, alla possibilità, alla cultura, al cammino del gregge.

La consapevolezza che ci sono altre pecore al di fuori del gregge; il missionario si preoccupa anche di loro, riconoscendo l'azione dello Spirito Santo su di esse.

theology and spirituality, between Christian tradition, orthodoxy and experience. It gave an incarnate content to faith, a new way of thinking about religious truth, and gave meaning to what had to be done. It promised the integration of faith, prayer and life, of feelings of anger and attempts at social analysis, however little this promise was fulfilled in my own life in practice.

An incarnate spirituality meant being political because politics was, at its simplest, the way people were in the world with each other. It meant living in a world of real liberation movements, and real political parties, rather than talking about an abstract concept of liberation or the Church and Politics. Above all it meant recognising that the powerless wanted power, and were not going to be satisfied when Christians covered up their lack of political commitment and strategy, their failures and lack of nerve, their fear of going onto uncharted ground, by talking about the powerlessness of the Cross. So it meant taking on a new set of disjunctions and ambiguities, and persevering with a new set of tensions and problems. In short it meant living in the moral mess of the political, being tainted by it and changed by it.

Liberation theology was insistent that no theology was politically neutral. Theology was, whatever the context, either prophetic and stimulated the righting of wrongs, or it supported the way things stood. For example, either it supported protest against women being only allowed to participate in the Autumn 1994 Synod on the Religious Life as

observers, or it supported the divine office of explaining-away such an outrageous travesty of justice in terms of some traditional principle. Either it strengthened the poor or it left them oppressed. This was a painful insight because it meant inevitable conflict.

Yet liberation theology, perhaps because it inhabited a kind of ecclesiastical desert, had its special temptations. While for the majority of those in the thick of it, power was first and foremost the power of non-violent resistance to evil — and this obviously could and did lead to martyrdom — for those on the European sidelines, it was tempting to want simply to bypass the Cross, to want the poor to win, just once in a while, and not to fret too much about the means. True, after the decolonisation of Zimbabwe, Namibia and majority rule in South Africa, in which I had the privilege of being involved because of my work at CIIR, only the most naïve equated the poor winning simplistically with the political victory of a particular liberation movement.

So, I would **personally** plead “guilty but extenuating circumstances” to Nicholas Lash’s and John Milbank’s charge against liberation theology, that a Nietzschean “orientation to power” infected its politics, and was deeply seductive, even if few Latin American practitioners of liberation theology succumbed to it in practice, and even if — in my head if not in my heart — it was a will to power for someone else (cf. J. Milbank, **Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason**, 1990, pp. 3-10; N. Lash “Eagles and Sheep: Christianity and the Public Order Beyond Modernity” in **The**

Beginning and the End of Religion, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 219-236). But I would argue on the basis of lives like that of Archbishop Oscar Romero and countless martyrs around the world that this charge does not stick as a fundamental critique of the practice of liberation theology. It did seek to enact “the peaceable generosity of God”.

My other full and frank confession would be that many in my generation in Western Europe took it for granted that the train of history might occasionally disappear down dark tunnels but would take us

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ultimately to our destinations. It did not bear thinking about that history might not be going anywhere in particular, but might be a blundering mess of conflictive human behaviour leading into blind alleys and possibly to environmental destruction of the planet. Any sober appraisal of the 20th century would suggest that this possibility did bear thinking about, and must be reflected on today. In this sense we enter our modern Garden of Gethsemane from a different direction to Christians from Eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union who have not shared our illusions.

How then in past and present political contexts does the option for the poor lead Christians into an apprenticeship in solidarity and so into a school for Christian spirituality? Or put another way, how does the option for the poor make of us a Church? My first observation would be that it encourages Christians to get into situations in which poverty, chastity and obedience become practical virtues within a struggle for justice. I would hasten to add “political virtues”. Practising these virtues contributes to the common good and builds the Church.

This was something that could be glimpsed in the midst of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa and it was perhaps no accident that Albert Nolan wrote **The Service of the Poor and Spiritual Growth** in 1984 as Christians were beginning to prepare the Kairos document and the liberation struggle was at its most intense. “Just as there are stages of prayer and stages of growth in love, and just as St Bernard can speak of steps in the development of the virtue of humility, so also in our commitment to the poor”, he wrote, “there is an analogous spiritual experience that goes through different steps or stages with its own crises or dark nights and its own discoveries or illuminations”. He goes on to describe these stages from compassion to romanticism to genuine solidarity (A. Nolan “The Service of the Poor and Spiritual Growth”, *CIIR Justice papers*, No. 6 1985, 3).

Liberation theology gave discipleship a compass bearing, moving it into action-reflection, **praxis**, and opened up a new set of social experiences whose

meanings were illuminated by biblical texts. Above all it was an antidote to the kind of self-indulgent, individualistic fantasy of “doing your own thing” that managed to survive the collapse of 1960’s optimism. It never is, of course, “your own thing”, merely what our time of advanced capitalism wants to sell to us.

Speaking from the Margins

The answer to Congar’s question “in what conditions do lay people have to sanctify themselves” requires a preliminary discernment of history and therefore a book or two. But the point I want to underline is that the question can only be answered by Europeans today by placing themselves within the painful history of the short 20th century which came to an end at the beginning of the 1990’s.

We live in the shadow of the Holocaust and of what really existing socialism really meant. Even the golden years of post-war growth have their downside of greed. Too many people in Western Europe have benefited in the last two decades from a politics that has increased inequality and excluded an “underclass” to vote for anything that threatens to move out from the *status quo* of “centre” parties. It appears increasingly that the majority of people in

democracies reject political parties overtly committed to social justice and redistribution of wealth. They certainly do not want their political aspirations to be expressed and implemented by political parties committed to profound social and economic transformation whether or not these might benefit the poor. The European historical experience of profound transformations has either been too terrible or involved

too much disillusionment.

The radical politics of the peaceable generosity of God has therefore to be played out increasingly in what has unfortunately been called, with very little concern for definition, “civil society”, yet without abandoning the restrictive world of party politics. But, though for minorities, growing impoverishment and marginalisation is a fundamental experience, Europeans appear culturally unable to construct a

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“theology from the margins”. In a world where political and economic power are becoming more and more centralised, Europe inhabits an ideological universe which is described as post-modern and “de-centred”, and which disclaims grand narratives, offering instead a babel of competing voices most of which may be deemed “marginal”. This is part and parcel of a philosophical climate in which relativism flourishes.

Those who claim to speak only from particular positions and for special interest groups cannot easily take a stance with regard to issues of global injustice, and have scant resources for broad social and political critiques. Addressing this ideological impasse is an integral part of any future European liberation theology. Taking the option for the poor in the European context thus has its own particular challenge, its own demanding discipleship which defines the journey as, at least temporarily, quite uncharted. The sign posts have gone. This has implications for a Christian spirituality in Europe far beyond what even Rahner imagined in the 1960’s.

Keeping going on this journey without dramatising a lack of bearings as a dark night of the soul is challenging. The challenge is that much greater given the disproportionate Church effort going towards seminary training for clergy, compared with the resources ploughed in to ongoing formation and education for the majority of Christians.

Which is why Mary, who prayed the revolutionary words of the Magnificat and did not run away, and stood at the foot of the Cross, still speaks to us from the margins today. She is the model of the Church speaking truth to power from the margins, even in her silence.

The option for the poor is certainly foolishness to today’s “Greeks”. So, at least, the temptation to jump from theological analysis into the programmes of particular political parties has gone. There is no obvious fit and an uncritical leap from theology to politics was always a mistake. The discipline of bringing about small, incremental change — if we are lucky — against rather heavy odds is the order of the day. We will increasingly be doing this as civic groups and coalitions using the political space opened up as Governments retreat under the pressures of neo-liberal ideology, whether in the

sphere of domestic poverty or international economic justice.

In the face of what Jon Sobrino calls “the crucified peoples”, today Rwanda and Burundi, yesterday El Salvador, Guatemala, Bosnia, this seems a tragically inadequate response. As Tina Beattie, an evangelical convert to Catholicism, writes: “We love Jesus, and we cannot bear to expose ourselves to the stark cruelty of human nature. So we run away. We find some quiet, protected place in which to pray and sing hymns and escape from the rotten world. We think of him, far away on a hillside that we cannot bring ourselves to visit, and we tell ourselves that at least we are not involved. We are not like those in the crowd who demand blood” (T. Beattie, *Rediscovering Mary: Insights from the Gospels*, Burns and Oates 1995, p. 117). Which is why Mary, who prayed the revolutionary words of the *Magnificat* and did not run away, and stood at the foot of the Cross, still speaks to us from the margins today. She is the model of the Church speaking truth to power from the margins, even in her silence.

The spiritual journey from the optimism of the 1960’s can sometimes seem like a crash course in humility. We are now in a time of sober hope, chastened by history. As Albert Nolan says: “When one is dedicated to the service of the poor it is even more difficult to accept that it is not they who need me but I who need them” (“The Service of the Poor”, p. 7).

UNE SPIRITUALITE AFRICAINE: DEFI DE LA CREATIVITE

Marie-Angèle Kitewo, S.N.D.

Toute activité missionnaire peut se justifier au nom de la Bonne Nouvelle qu'il faut proclamer à travers le monde. Au nom de la Bonne Nouvelle, nous sommes sortis de bonne heure de nos maisons, comme l'a fait le Semeur dans Luc 8:5-8, Marc 4:1-9 et Matthieu 13:1-9. Il est sorti pour semer du bon grain. Nous aussi, nous sommes sortis pour rencontrer nos frères et soeurs qui sont en attente, ou non, de la Bonne Nouvelle. Nous en connaissons la définition et la valeur. C'est pourquoi nous nous sentons animés et mêmes poussés par le zèle de la propager le plus loin possible dans notre monde. Nous le faisons, ou du moins nous essayons de le faire, parce que nous sommes sûrs de sa force créatrice ou re-créatrice.

Il serait bon peut-être, de nous demander quelques fois, au nom des peuples et cultures que nous rencontrons: ce message, pour qui est-il Bonne Nouvelle? Quelles en sont les conséquences dans la vie des cultures qui l'accueillent?

Pour le Semeur de l'Evangile, sa semence est dite: "bonne, c'est du bon grain"; pourtant la récolte qui a suivi a été évaluée différemment: très bonne, bonne, insuffisante et même inexistante; car une partie de la semence est tombée dans les épines, elle a été étouffée; une autre partie, tombée sur le sol rocailleux, est desséchée et, finalement, celle tombée sur le chemin, a été piétinée par les passants, et mangé par les oiseaux.

Le message évangélique deviendrait la Bonne Nouvelle pour ceux et celles qui le reçoivent dans la mesure où il leur offre des moyens pour atteindre les objectifs primordiaux de leur existence. Ceux-ci peuvent varier d'une culture à l'autre. Voilà pourquoi la connaissance des cultures de ces peuples est impérative. Généralement parlant, aux yeux de beaucoup de chrétiens et de missionnaires en Afrique, il y a encore une hiatus entre les traditions religieuses émanant des cultures et certaines expressions de foi prêchées par l'Eglise Catholique. Il en résulte que dans certains cas, le chrétien se trouve dans un dilemme.

Nous pouvons reconnaître plusieurs catégories de personnes à travers la réponse que Jésus a donnée à

ses disciples qui lui demandaient les explications de cette parabole. Jésus les décrit ainsi:

- Ceux qui accueillent la parole et puis l'abandonnent très vite;
- Ceux qui croient pour une courte durée;
- Ceux qui sont préoccupés de tant d'autres soucis;
- Ceux qui l'écoutent, l'accueillent, la gardent, et produisent du fruit par leur persévérance.

Cette parabole fait aussi penser aux diverses manières dont l'individu peut être affecté par son groupe. Bien que Jésus ait parlé au pluriel ("Ceux qui..."), il y a moyen de voir dans sa réponse un aspect d'individualisme quant à la manière de vivre la Parole entendue et accueillie. Il n'y a pas d'éventuelle implication sur la communauté à laquelle ces catégories de personne pourraient appartenir. En effet, disons-le en passant, le principe d'appartenance au groupe est fondamental dans la vie des Africains, il détermine l'identité et la position de la personne au sein de ce groupe.

En guise de paraphraser la réponse de Jésus — tout en l'appliquant aux cultures africaines — je dirais que trois domaines culturels peuvent être identifiés:

- Des domaines culturels dont les principes de base sont diamétralement à l'opposé de la Bonne Nouvelle; celle-ci, par conséquent, n'a pas la chance d'être accueilli, ou du moins, difficilement. Le domaine de la sorcellerie, par exemple, s'ouvrirait difficilement à l'Evangile.
- Ceux dont certains éléments de base sont de pierres d'attente;
- Ceux, flexibles, caractérisés par une certaine ouverture. Peu importe le type de culture à laquelle nous nous adressons, il importe que nous en ayons une certaine connaissance pour permettre à la parole que nous "semons" de pouvoir s'incarner et devenir vie.

Ceci dit, parlons un peu du titre de l'exposé: le titre proposé pour mes deux exposés, comme d'ailleurs le thème général de la semaine traite de la

spiritualité de la mission de l'Église. En ce qui me concerne, j'essaierai de parler un peu de la notion de spiritualité dans le contexte africain. Ensuite, et comme par ricochet, proposer certains éléments qui peuvent favoriser une certaine harmonisation de la Bonne Nouvelle en terre africaine.

I. UNE SPIRITUALITÉ AFRICAINE

M'inspirant de l'article "Spirituality in the African Perspective" ("la Spiritualité dans la Perspective Africaine", [KALILOMBE, P (Mgr) "Spirituality in the African Perspective" in *A. I. M. Monastic Bulletin* N° 58, pp 7-22; 1995]) de Mgr Patrick Kalilombe (1995), je dirais que dans la perspective africaine, la spiritualité est faite des attitudes, des croyances et pratiques qui animent la vie des peuples et les aident à atteindre les réalités supersensibles.

Cette définition fait écho à une des interprétations des religions traditionnelles africaines. (Ici, le terme "tradition" n'a aucun aspect temporaire. Il souligne l'appartenance aux coutumes, qui assurent les traditions). Elles se définissent, non pas à partir d'un système élaboré de dogmes, mais plutôt à partir des attitudes, des pratiques, qui permettent une certaine communion avec le monde des puissances invisibles. Il est vrai que dans la pensée africaine, une religion équivaut essentiellement à une manière de vivre dans ce monde en relation avec le monde invisible. Cette relation affecte la vie entière de l'individu, aussi bien que celle de la communauté, prise comme un tout, là où l'individu se développe et se réalise. En d'autres termes, la religion se préoccupe tout à la fois des croyances et des rituels qui en sont des expressions et des symboles. Tout cela implique une relation entre l'être humain et les êtres supranaturels (Vansina, J., 1973:221).

Néanmoins, la spiritualité ne peut pas être conçue comme une propriété privée d'une telle religion donnée; elle existe dans toutes les religions et dans toutes les cultures. C'est ce qui fait que nous pouvons la définir de plusieurs façons. En effet, si nous acceptons que la spiritualité est un aspect de la culture humaine, dans le sens qu'elle détermine une manière de vivre ses relations en conformité avec

cette culture, il est évident alors qu'il faut parler des formes de spiritualité comme il y a des cultures. Les différences entre les formes de spiritualité ne s'articulent pas en termes d'opposition, par exemple, "africaines" opposé à "non-africaines", mais plutôt en termes de formes d'expression. Les Africains eux-mêmes ne sont pas liés par une spiritualité uniforme et unique.

Quelques Principes de base d'une Spiritualité africaine

(Cas de *Kiziku* chez les Bakoongo du Zaïre)

Si nous voulons découvrir la spiritualité africaine et en pénétrer le sens, il nous faudra la chercher à travers les rites pratiqués par le peuple à la recherche de solutions aux problèmes qui affectent la vie de l'individu aussi bien que celle de la communauté. (Vansina, cité par MACGAFFEY, W., *Religion and Society in Central Africa: The Bakoongo of Lower Zaïre*; The University of Chicago Press, 1986:1). En guise d'illustration, je voudrais décrire, en résumé, un des rites de guérison appelé *KIZIKU*, tel qu'il a été pratiqué chez les Bakoongo du Zaïre, afin de nous rendre compte du type de spiritualité.

Kiziku est principalement un rite traditionnel de guérison. Son rôle spécifique est de faciliter le dialogue entre les membres d'un clan et leurs ancêtres (les morts-vivants) en

vue de trouver ensemble une solution aux problèmes qui déstabilisent la vie communautaire. C'est un événement auquel j'ai été présente il y a un certain nombre d'années. Même aujourd'hui, les cas de *Kiziku* ne sont pas rares parmi les Bakoongo.

Les membres d'un clan se sont vus victimes d'une variété de malchances tel que: nombreuses maladies incurables, nombreux décès, surtout les décès subits, plusieurs cas de chômage parmi les membres du clan, stérilité parmi les femmes mariées, les jeunes filles n'avaient pas la chance de se trouver un fiancé. En plus de cela, une mauvaise récolte a aggravé la situation. Il faut aussi noter l'existence d'une division entre les membres du clan, elle datait

Généralement parlant, aux yeux de beaucoup de chrétiens et de missionnaires en Afrique, il y a encore une hiatus entre les traditions religieuses émanant des cultures et certaines expressions de foi prêchées par l'Église Catholique. Il en résulte que dans certains cas, le chrétien se trouve dans un dilemme.

de plusieurs années. Conscients de cet état de choses, les responsables ont pris la décision de s'adresser aux ancêtres à travers le rite de Kiziku afin de redresser la situation. Le jour venu, les membres importants du clan se sont rassemblés dans leur village d'origine. Le porte-parole introduisit la réunion par un récit allégorique qui présentait le léopard et le rossignol qui, chacun voulait bâtir une cité de vie harmonieuse.

Al principio era el caos. Llegabamos de la dispersión, la diversidad y el desconocimiento; cada uno con su aceleración y desarmonía interior. Pero el espíritu de Dios aleteaba sobre el Seminario del SEDOS 1997.

El Señor del Universo nos ha ido enviando día a día, como una lluvia mansa, sus mensajeros: dos hermanas y dos hermanos cuyas personas nos han impactado por su profunda experiencia de un Dios encarnado y que está de parte de los pobres y los que sufren.

En el compartir del grupo, (diálogo y oración), la semilla recibida ha encontrado la tierra de la comunidad, y la Palabra se ha hecho llamada y envío en nuestros corazones:

LO QUE HABEIS VIVIDO ESTOS DIAS, ESO ES LA ESPIRITU-ALIDAD DE LA MISION. ID Y HACED VOSOTROS LO MISMO.

Le rossignol réussit parce qu'il respectait et aimait tous les habitants de sa cité, tandis que le léopard échoua puisqu'il tuait et mangeait les siens. Il fut alors abandonné par tous. Sa cité devint une forêt dans laquelle il vit en solitude.

Cette introduction fut suivie d'une longue discussion qui a duré toute une nuit. Son objectif était d'obtenir l'agrément de tous, afin de s'unir pour rétablir l'entente dans le clan et, ensuite, s'adresser aux ancêtres pour le bien-être de tous les membres du clan. L'objectif fut atteint.

Au cours de la seconde nuit, par des chants et appels, les participants ont invoqué les ancêtres afin qu'ils indiquent les moyens ou les objets qu'ils devaient utiliser pour se débarrasser de toutes ces maladies et malchances. A travers des objets symboliques (bracelets), la volonté des ancêtres fut interprétée par l'assemblée. Ce fut le moment alors d'entamer la partie du rite qui traitait de Kiziku même.

Les chants et danses autour du grand feu eurent pour but d'appeler les esprits des ancêtres à rejoindre l'assemblée, et dire ce qu'ils pensaient de la réunion. Encore une fois, la réponse fut donnée, et à travers les symboles: (une femme en transe certifia que les ancêtres étaient contents de la réunion et de ses résultats, si contents qu'ils furent attirés par les chants et vinrent danser avec l'assemblée. Cette joie de l'au-delà envahit les participants au rite. Ils l'exprimèrent par des cris, des chants et des danses qui durèrent jusqu'à l'aube. C'était là l'expression de reconnaissance aux ancêtres pour leur intervention.

Bien que sommaire, cette description nous met en présence d'une réalité vécue, un exemple où la vie et la religion vont main dans la main. Il y a un transfert presque directe de ce monde vers le monde invisible. Rappelons-nous que la religion africaine est essentiellement comprise comme une manière de vivre dans ce monde en relation avec le monde invisible (P. Kalilombe, 1995:7). Le rite nous a dévoilé le vrai visage des participants, leur identité

dépouillée de tout élément secondaire tel que l'instruction reçue à l'école.

Les activités qui ont pris place au cours du rite, aussi bien que des attitudes attendues des participants découlent des principes culturels de base. Pour le cas des Bakongo, le rite a souligné l'importance de la croyance dans les ancêtres.

Il est vrai que tous les peuples ont leurs ancêtres; même dans l'Eglise Catholique nous parlons de "nos ancêtres dans la foi". La différence réside dans le type de relations que nous entretenons avec eux. Jamais je n'ai entendu les chrétiens invoquer Abraham ou les Apôtres, par exemple, de venir les joindre 'physiquement' et leur parler, comme cela existe dans le cas des rites. Les ancêtres des Africains sont des êtres vivants, des 'morts-vivants'. Ces êtres font partie de l'univers de beaucoup de peuples en Afrique. Il y a un réseau de relations continues les uns avec les autres qui affecte et oriente toutes les activités de la personne aussi bien que celles de la communauté toute entière, je veux dire, le clan (Kalilombe, *ibidem*; BOCKIE, S., *Death and The Invisible Powers: The World of Kongo Belief*. Indiana University Press. 1993: préface, x).

Raconter une telle expérience rituelle devant une assemblée comme celle-ci risque de susciter des questions sur l'intégrité de la foi catholique de ce peuple, et la mienne aussi. (Notez bien que tous les participants à ce rituel étaient chrétiens et le sont encore en ces jours; les catholiques étaient majoritaires).

Devant cette situation, les attitudes des messagers/ messagères de la Bonne Nouvelles varient: il peut y avoir condamnation de ces pratiques, parce qu'elles sont jugées mauvaises, opposées à la foi catholique. A la place, le peuple serait invité à accepter de nouvelles théories développées par ces apôtres pour nier l'action des ancêtres. Une telle attitude pourrait provoquer une certaine rupture entre les messagers/messagères et les peuples auxquels ils s'adressent, au point de

dire, comme à Athènes: "Nous t'entendrons là-dessus une autre fois" (Actes 17:32). Il arrive que ceux qui, pour l'une ou l'autre raisons, se conforment à ces théories de négation, éprouvent une certaine insécurité dans leur vie, parce qu'ils croient fermement à l'importance des ancêtres dans leur culture. Le résultat est un dilemme tel décrit dans cette chanson zaïroise:

"Chrétiens, vous voilà malheureux!
Le matin à la messe, le soir chez le devin!
Amulette en poche, scapulaire au cou!"

Il y a donc un certain schisme 'imposé' entre la spiritualité traditionnelle et la chrétienté, une opposition même, là où nous devrions voir une variation. Ces personnes sont taxées de mener une double vie. Pourtant, dans beaucoup de cas, ceci exprime tout simplement le besoin de résoudre leurs problèmes. Les gens savent et croient que l'un des moyens efficaces pour obtenir de bons résultats dans leurs activités et d'entretenir de bons rapports avec les ancêtres. Ils sont fondateurs et gardiens des clans dont ils assurent la pérennité.

Dans le cas où il n'y a pas de condamnation de la croyance dans les ancêtres, faut-il croire que le messager/messagère partage la même croyance avec le peuple? Ici, l'identité du messager entre en ligne de compte. S'il s'agit d'un(e) non-Africain(e), ses efforts peuvent ne pas être pris en considération. C'est une amusante plaisanterie, une moquerie camouflée; puisque cette personne n'appartient pas socialement au même groupe. Elle est étrangère à la culture du groupe. Les ancêtres en question ne sont pas 'siens'. La situation n'est pas plus claire dans le cas d'un apôtre africain: son comportement à cet égard peut être pris comme une confirmation ou un reproche à ce que le peuple croit...

Si nous acceptons que la spiritualité est un aspect de la culture humaine, dans le sens qu'elle détermine une manière de vivre ses relations en conformité avec cette culture, il est évident alors qu'il faut parler des formes de spiritualité comme il y a des cultures.

La croyance aux ancêtres peut être considérée comme un système inachevé des relations entre les humains et les êtres de l'au-delà. Je dis "inachevé" dans le sens où les relations s'arrêtent au niveau des ancêtres, elles n'incluent pas l'Être Suprême. Même dans ce cas, ne pas inclure l'Être Suprême ne veut pas dire l'ignorer ou le nier. Il y a une nette distinction quant à la nature des êtres qui composent la cosmogonie des peuples africains:

(1) les *ancêtres*, qui sont des êtres humains créés par l'Être Suprême; ils sont dans leur second état de vie

après avoir vécu le premier dans ce monde. (2) Toutes sortes d'*esprits*, des bons et des mauvais et leurs représentations. (3) Les *êtres humains*, ils sont, eux, dans leur première étape de la vie. Beaucoup de récits cosmogoniques racontent la création de ces êtres par l'Être Suprême.

Je ne vous apprends rien de nouveau en disant qu'il y a de ces peuples africains qui confessaient l'existence de Dieu avant l'arrivée des premiers missionnaires chrétiens sur leurs territoires. Je dirais même qu'ils connaissaient Dieu, dans le sens africain que, connaître le nom d'une personne, c'est aussi connaître la personne elle-même.

Considérant les types des rapports entretenus entre les êtres du monde visible entre eux, et avec ceux du monde invisible, nous pouvons retenir quelques caractéristiques de la spiritualité africaine. C'est une spiritualité essentiellement du dialogue et de communion.

1. Spiritualité du Dialogue

Ce dialogue est à situer au niveau ontologique aussi bien qu'au niveau éthique. Le dialogue est ce qui constitue le trait dominant des rites traditionnelles, comme *Kiziku*. Ce dernier est le lieu par excellence de rencontre entre les deux mondes, le monde visible, et le monde invisible. Il ne peut être compris qu'en fonction du dialogue.

Au niveau ontologique, et suivant la cosmogonie des peuples (Luba, Bambara...), il y a un lien entre le dialogue et le fait que l'Être Suprême a pourvu l'être humain de la parole afin qu'il ait la faculté de répondre, et ainsi établir un dialogue non seulement avec l'Être Suprême, mais aussi avec les semblables, les créatures. Sur le plan éthique, le dialogue est ce qui assure une dynamique fondamentale au sein de toute chose, parce que chacune n'est que parce qu'en-train-de-répondre. Rien n'est statique, plat ou neutre (KIBWILA, Yala A.M. "A l'école de prière, une Pastorale initiatique de la mystique Evangélique" in *La Prière Africaine*, Actes du 2è Colloque Internationale du 10-12 Janvier, 1994 (Kinshasa), 1994:109).

Dans le rituel *Kiziku* cité plus haut, le dialogue apparaît comme ce qui justifie l'existence même du rituel. C'est grâce au dialogue que la volonté des ancêtres peut être communiquée et interprétée par les humains. Les membres du clan pouvaient alors mesurer la participation de leurs ancêtres dans la recherche des solutions aux problèmes claniques.

Plusieurs formes d'expression comme invocations, chants, symboles et conversations ont été utilisées pour assurer le dialogue entre les deux mondes.

Invocations: Une des parties du rituel est faite des appels adressés aux ancêtres pour les inviter à joindre l'assemblée et prendre part aux activités de la réunion.

Chants: En plus de ces appels, il y a une série de chants connus comme chants d'invocation par lesquels le peuple a exprimé le besoin d'établir des contacts spéciaux avec ses aînés dans l'au-delà. Le caractère dialogal apparaît aussi bien dans le thème général de ces chants, et à travers leur structure. Ils sont souvent chantés en dialogue, comme le montre la séquence suivante, extraite d'une chanson en honneur de jumeaux (Considérés comme 'enfants spéciaux et mystérieux', les jumeaux sont parfois traités comme les ancêtres avec lesquels ils sont intimement associés, selon la culture des Bakoongo. Ceci apparaît dans les cas des maladies des jumeaux eux-mêmes ou de leurs proches):

Solo: Ils sont venus des abîmes
Ces enfants sont difficiles

R/: Des abîmes, eh yaaya
Nous enfants (jumeaux) sommes difficiles

Solo: Des abîmes, eh yaaya
Remboursez notre argent

R/: Des abîmes, eh yaaya
L'emprenteur n'est pas ici

Solo: Des abîmes, eh yaaya
Remboursez notre argent

R/: Des abîmes, eh yaaya
Vous vous payerez vous-mêmes.

C'est une conversation entre les deux groupes des participants; ils représentent le dialogue entre l'esprit de jumeaux / ancêtres qui réclament leur droit, et la famille. Le chant raconte en même temps, le phénomène des jumeaux tel qu'il est conçu par le peuple, comme faisant partie des croyances de sa culture. Les participants sont convaincus que leurs appels sont entendus, car des êtres auxquels ils s'adressent sont vivants, même s'ils sont invisibles.

Avec la même conviction, le même dialogue est pratiqué dans la messe dite "en rites zaïrois". Elle

commence avec des invocations, lesquelles sont des expressions de la foi commune dans l'intervention des forces de l'au-delà:

Prêtre: Nous sommes tous à Dieu

Assemblée: (Il est) notre origine et notre fin.

Prêtre: Sainte Marie, reste avec nous, Toi, la mère de Dieu, reste avec nous, Ecoute notre prière, reste avec nous. Reste avec toutes les personnes qui participent à la messe aujourd'hui.

Assemblée: Reste avec nous, reste avec toutes ces personnes.

Prêtre: O vous, nos ancêtres, restez avec nous, Vous qui avez adoré Dieu en toute honnêteté, restez avec nous. Ecoutez notre prière, restez avec nous, restez avec toutes les personnes qui offrent la messe aujourd'hui.

Assemblée: Restez avec nous, restez avec toutes ces personnes.

Dans les deux cas, l'objectif visé est le même: à travers des invocations les participants cherchent à établir un contact spécial avec les leurs dans le monde invisible afin de communier aux mêmes réalités de la vie. Nous pouvons dire que dans beaucoup de cas, l'invocation caractérise un événement important.

Dans le contexte des rites de guérison, par exemple, elle introduit vers une action qui devrait s'accomplir avec la collaboration des puissances invisibles. C'est par l'invocation que le leader (prêtre, pasteur, ngaanga, ou n'importe quel expert) introduit le dialogue avec ses partenaires.

Symboles et Conversations: Tout appel suppose une réponse. Aux invocations lancées au cours de rite, par les participants, les réponses sont données de différentes manières. Ce sont des signes, des paroles et des symboles interprétés par des experts. Dans le cas de *Kiziku*, cette interprétation a été confirmée par le message d'une femme en transe qui parlait au nom d'une ancêtre dont elle représentait les traits physiques. Son message se conformait aux attentes de l'assemblée. L'objectif de la réunion était atteint grâce au dialogue entre les membres.

2. Spiritualité de la Communion

La communion est ce qui, généralement, suit le dialogue, elle est son point d'aboutissement. Etant donné que l'individu évolue et évalue son accomplissement personnel en fonction du groupe d'appartenance, nous pouvons parler de l'existence d'une certaine 'parenté' qui garde les membres du groupe solidaires. De là découlera l'hospitalité ou la célébration de l'accueil de l'autre, dans le cas où le groupe vit en harmonie; dans le cas contraire, c'est le rejet, la haine même. Dans un cas comme dans un autre, nous reconnaissons cette communion dans le sens de "contamination" collective par les mêmes sentiments. Mais, c'est une communion bien limitée; elle ne va généralement pas plus loin que les contours du groupe. L'hospitalité réservée à un étranger relève d'autres bases. C'est plutôt une protection personnelle que la communion. En effet, l'étranger est un inconnu, ses pensées restent cachées. Il est donc préférable de gagner ses faveurs que de l'indisposer, car cela pourrait coûter cher à soi-même ou au groupe.

Il est vrai que tous les peuples ont leurs ancêtres; même dans l'Eglise Catholique nous parlons de "nos ancêtres dans la foi". La différence réside dans le type de relations que nous entretenons avec eux. Les ancêtres des Africains sont des êtres vivants, des 'morts-vivants'. Ces êtres font partie de l'univers de beaucoup de peuples en Afrique.

Il en découle de cette communion un certain partage de responsabilités au point où chacun peut s'attribuer l'honneur des succès d'un membre du groupe, comme aussi l'on est l'objet d'une honte causée par des fautes commises par un membre du groupe. Bien qu'en réalité il y a des cas des personnes qui se séparent ou sont séparées du groupe, la tradition veut que la communion soit maintenue. D'où l'insistance sur la conservation des liens, comme exprimée par le proverbe suivant: "*Nsinga kaanda niinga wuniingaanga, ka wutabukaa ko*" (le fil qui rattache les membres du clan peut s'amincir, mais ne peut pas se briser). L'aspect négatif de cette communion est la tendance du groupe de se refermer sur lui-même, excluant toute personne qui n'atteste aucun lien en commun.

3. Spiritualité Horizontale

Le caractère horizontale est évident dans les relations entre les membres du groupe, dans ce monde, et ceux du monde invisible. C'est une sorte de partage de vie basée sur l'organisation sociale. Il y a une dépendance mutuelle qui inspire à la fois la confiance, mais aussi la crainte. Comme illustré par le rituel *Kiziku*, le dialogue se fait entre les habitants des deux mondes, les uns considérés comme des aînés, à cause de leur expérience de vie ici-bas et dans l'au-delà. Les autres comptent sur la protection de leurs aînés.

Dans beaucoup de cultures africaines, la place donnée à Dieu, laisse souvent dans l'ombre le type de relations existant entre l'Être Suprême et les humains. Cela a conduit certains auteurs à conclure qu'il n'y a pas du tout de relations, ou bien que ces peuples ne

**“Master, where do you live”?
we asked.**

**“Come and see”, he replied.
Which we did, and here’s
how God surprised us.**

**God lives among the wounded
and battered and invites us to
wholistic healing there if we
wish to transform our world.**

**God’s Spirit needs the
different cultures in order to
flow freely, and we
experienced this deeply in our
group.**

**God revealed afresh that no
single religion can exhaust
divine revelation, or satisfy the
longings of all people.**

**The experience of God’s Spirit
... the deep silence at the
centre of life ... our ‘response-
ability’ to life and to history.**

**Our openness in the group,
our acceptance of the
diversity among us, our
listening with respect, helped
us to respond to one another
freely.**

**Coming from 11 different
countries, we were able to
experience our common
humanity and thank God for it
in our celebration of the
Eucharist.**

**And so we have been
encouraged once more to
break out of our narrow circles
and through our love and
service transform our world.**

**We pray that life may never
truly be the same again.**

connaissent pas Dieu. Par contre, pour un auteur comme Bockie (1993), les ancêtres sont regardés comme médiateurs entre Dieu et les hommes parce qu'ils sont près de lui et partagent certaines de ses qualités, telles que l'invisibilité. Par conséquent, Dieu n'est pas adressé directement par les êtres humains. Les expériences vécues prouvent le contraire, les chrétiens parlent directement à Dieu, tout en s'adressant à leurs ancêtres.

A propos de “N’kisi” (c’est un savoir et une technique pour guérir), par exemple, le peuple Bakoongo du Zaïre affirme avec conviction que c’est un savoir et des techniques reçus de *Nzaambi* (Dieu). Il les a communiquées à leurs ancêtres dès l’origine de l’organisation du dit peuple, pour la prospérité et la protection des clans. Ainsi, lors de l’application de ces objets, Nkisi, l’expert invoque aussi bien la puissance divine que l’aide de ses ancêtres. De ce fait, force nous est de souligner encore un autre aspect de cette spiritualité africaine, à savoir:

4. Une Spiritualité sous le regard de Dieu

Bien que des peuples en Afrique confessent l'existence de l'Être Suprême comme origine de toutes les choses, la notion de Dieu varie d'un peuple à l'autre. En parlant de la spiritualité sous le regard de Dieu, je voudrais simplement souligner cette conscience des peuples de reconnaître l'Être Suprême comme celui qui voit tout, qui sait tout, et peut tout faire. C'est une des conséquences découlant naturellement de la conception de Dieu Créateur.

Des expressions comme “*Nzaambi mbaangi*” (Dieu est témoin), ou “*Kaluunga mwaasi kena*” (le Tout Puissant est comme une porte ouverte, Il voit tout), traduisent une notion ambiguë de l'omniprésence et l'omniscience de l'Être Suprême. Cette conscience fait naître chez l'individu religieux des attitudes de confiance mais aussi de crainte. Ce Dieu est spécialement invoqué dans des circonstances conflictuelles où l'on se sent opprimé. C'est une des explications de la prolifération des groupes de prières à Kinshasa et dans de grands agglomérations du pays, en cette période des crises politiques et économiques du Zaïre.

II. CREATIVITE D'UNE EGLISE

Il ne s'agit pas ici d'établir une liste d'actions spécifiques à entreprendre. Il s'agit plutôt de souligner deux éléments de base qui déterminent la créativité de l'Eglise. Deux impératifs devraient orienter les chrétiens et les leaders des Eglises locales dans leurs efforts de créativité: il faut tout d'abord reconnaître et accepter les différences; ensuite, déterminer les objectifs de cette créativité.

Les différences:

En parlant des différences, je voudrais souligner et prévenir contre cette habitude de chercher “des pierres d'attente” à travers les cultures africaines. Raisonner en ces termes est équivalent à évaluer ces cultures en fonction d'une autre, ou les comparer à un modèle quelconque. Accepter les différences nous aiderait à considérer ces cultures telles qu'elles sont.

L'avènement de Jésus et son message a été un

événement sans précédent. Même si l'Ancien Testament est considérée, dans un sens, comme la préparation de la mission de Jésus, cela ne diminue pas le fait que son message est “autre chose”, différent, les écritures le soulignent: “Il a été dit”... “Moi je vous dis...” (Mt 5:20 sv). Les persécutions organisées par les Juifs contre les apôtres et les premiers chrétiens sont une preuve de cette nouveauté qui dérangeait. La Bonne Nouvelle de Jésus, en son temps, ou à nos jours, est un message qui doit être incarné afin de porter le fruit qui demeure, comme nous l'avons souligné dans l'introduction, en référence à la parabole du Semeur. C'est d'une rencontre harmonieuse entre la semence et le sol que résulte le fruit en abondance. Mais, l'incarnation n'est pas possible sans la connaissance approfondie de l'Evangile et celle des cultures auxquelles nous nous adressons.

Les Objectifs:

Quant aux objectifs de la créativité, il est important de nous demander quel type de chrétien et quel type d'environnement lui faut-il pour s'accomplir.

La référence faite à la cosmogonie de quelques cultures africaines nous donne l'idée de la manière dont l'Africain représente son monde spirituel et religieux. La prospérité, le mieux-être, sont parmi les soucis primordiaux qui l'occupent. C'est ce qui explique la nature de ses relations avec les êtres spirituels du monde invisible. Les réponses reçues de ces esprits ne sont pas toujours la bonne réponse, elles peuvent conduire à l'erreur. C'est pourquoi il est d'une importance capitale que le christianisme doit être présenté avec toute sa richesse, capable de donner des réponses concrètes et efficaces aux problèmes des chrétiens (MILINGO, E. (Mgr) *The World in Between: Christian Healing and the Struggle for Spiritual Survival*; C Hurst and Co. London, 1994: 77).

En observant la façon dont nos Eglises locales fonctionnent, en Afrique, une série de questions peut se poser:

- Quels étaient les objectifs des missionnaires qui ont établi de petits et grands séminaires en Afrique?

L'avènement de Jésus et son message a été un événement sans précédent. Même si l'Ancien Testament est considérée, dans un sens, comme la préparation de la mission de Jésus, cela ne diminue pas le fait que son message est “autre chose”, différent, les écritures le soulignent: “Il a été dit”... “Moi je vous dis...” (Mt 5:20 sv).

- Qu'est-ce qu'un prêtre autochtone représente au sein de son peuple, au sein de l'Eglise Universelle?
- Comment expliquer l'absence quasi-totale d'une référence aux coutumes et traditions dans les programmes des cours, si ces prêtres sont destinés à être pasteurs de leur peuple?

Les réflexions philosophiques et théologiques forment l'épine dorsale de ces programmes. Il me semble qu'elles porteraient beaucoup de bon fruit si elles s'appliquaient aussi aux traditions et coutumes dans lesquelles les chrétiens vivent.

Les mêmes questions posées plus haut peuvent s'appliquer à tous les consacrés africains de congrégations religieuses. L'équilibre dans ces domaines est la condition primordiale de l'identité du chrétien, du religieux/religieuse, et de la spiritualité africaine capable d'engendrer une Eglise à visage africain.

CONCLUSION:

Au cours de cette réflexion, mon intention était de présenter quelques aspects de la spiritualité africaine. Celle-ci est essentiellement basée sur la croyance aux ancêtres et la relation avec les deux mondes. Etant donné le caractère dynamique du message évangélique lui-même, la mission de l'Eglise serait de faciliter son incarnation dans les cultures. A cet effet, l'exemple de Saint Paul dans sa prédication est éclairant, quand il montre aux Juifs la supériorité de Jésus par rapport à Moïse, à Melchisedek; la supériorité du sacrifice de la croix par rapport aux sacrifices du sang des chèvres et des taureaux. Ainsi, un Africain peut bien vivre en chrétien, tout en croyant aux ancêtres à condition qu'il soit amené à découvrir et à reconnaître la hiérarchie transcendante des relations. Cette rencontre est aussi une sorte de bonne terre qui pourra produire du bon fruit pour une créativité d'une Eglise.

Référence:

MULAGO WA CIKALA , M. La Religion Traditionnelle des Bantu et leur *Vision du monde*; P.U.Z Faculté de Théologie Catholique, Kinshasa 1973.

Profession of Faith

*We believe that God is love.
He sent us Jesus Christ to free us
from slavery.
We are privileged to encounter him
in our lives.
We have to share the gift with others,
many of whom are loved by God
without knowing it.
Jesus walks with us
and when we listen to others
and share with them,
we come to a closer relationship
with Jesus Christ
and with one another.
And together we realise
The Kingdom of God.*

*We believe that we are called by God
to meet him in Christ his Son.
This encounter gives us joy
and meaning to our lives.
We are also sent by Him
into the world and to the others*

where He is already waiting for us.

*We believe in the continuous newness
of Christ.*

*In all humility, with our weakness,
we follow Him on the road
and offer what we have;
knowing that if one is planting,
another is watering;
hoping that the few talents we were given
will bear fruit for the others.*

*We believe that there is no mission
unless we empty ourselves
in order to be filled in by Christ Himself
in whom we put our trust.*

*We believe that we are not the only ones
that work in the world
which is God's field.
Faithful, where we are
and with what we have,
we shall echo the call of Christ
to find labourers for God's harvest.*

LA SPIRITUALITE DE L'EGLISE EN AFRIQUE ET LE MINISTERE DE GUERISON

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INTRODUCTION

Nous sommes proches de deux événements très importants: la fin du présent millénaire et l'avènement du suivant. Deux événements qui se rencontrent à un moment comme au soir d'une journée bien remplie, où nous nous penchons sur ce que la journée a été, et sur ce qu'elle pourrait être le jour suivant, éclairée par l'expérience d'aujourd'hui. C'est dans cette optique que se situe notre réflexion sur la Spiritualité de l'Eglise en Afrique et le ministère de guérison.

A nos jours, nous sommes fort préoccupés de la prolifération des mouvements et activités de guérison au sein de nos communautés chrétiennes. Certaines responsables des Eglises ont pris du temps pour y réfléchir en profondeur (De Haes, R: "Le Ministère de la Guérison" in *Revue Africaine de Théologie* Vol 9 n° 17, Avril 1985 Kinshasa). La démarche généralement en cours dans ce genre de réflexion commence par interroger la Bible afin d'y trouver un enseignement de base concernant aussi bien les causes que le sens de la maladie et la souffrance. Une fois éclairé par l'enseignement biblique, l'on se tourne vers la réflexion théologique du phénomène maladie/souffrance et la guérison. Les conclusions tirées servent pour conseiller, faire des propositions et suggestions afin d'orienter la vie de nos communautés chrétiennes (Cfr. BIMWENYI KWESHI, O., "Réflexion Théologique sur la spiritualité africaine chrétienne" in *La Prière africaine*, Actes du 2è Colloque International du 10-12 janvier 1994, Kinshasa).

Nous le savons tous, la Bible contient la Parole de Dieu, elle nous parle de la démarche de Dieu pour notre salut. Mais cette Parole peut être regardée comme "incarnée", dans le sens de "se vêtir" des aspects culturels, hébraïques d'abord et ensuite des autres peuples par où elle est introduite. Cet aspect

est d'une importance telle qu'il mérite que nous puissions nous y arrêter dans notre réflexion, laquelle évolue comme suit:

Dans un premier point, je parlerai du contexte de la mission de l'Eglise à l'heure actuelle en Afrique. C'est une façon de jeter un coup d'oeil sur quelques traits dominants du comportement des membres de nos communautés chrétiennes face à l'Evangile. L'objectif de cette réflexion est de nous situer dans un contexte réel de vie des chrétiens, "hic et nunc".

L'Eglise Catholique au Zaïre est encore en quelques sorte, celle des dirigeants, c.à.d. les évêques, les prêtres, les religieux et religieuses. En disant ceci, je n'ai aucune intention de critiquer la structure ecclésiale de ce pays; je voudrais tout simplement montrer ce que le chrétien pense et dit de l'Eglise.

N.B. Bien que j'emploie le terme "Afrique, je ne prétends pas parler de toute l'Afrique, elle est très diversifiée, comme tout le monde le sait; On ne parle que de ce qu'on connaît. Ainsi, me limiterai-je à l'un ou l'autre cultures des peuples dont je dispose de quelque information.

Le deuxième point traitera du ministère de guérison. Ceci n'est ni une analyse, ni un rapport des séances de guérison. Je me concentrerai sur l'interprétation, le sens que le peuple donne aux phénomènes maladie-souffrance et guérison. Ici, je me baserai spécialement sur le peuple Bakongo du Zaïre.

1. La Spiritualité de la mission de l'Eglise à l'heure actuelle

Deux choses me semblent fort embarrassantes dans ce premier point: donner l'identité de l'Eglise et définir sa spiritualité en fonction de sa mission d'aujourd'hui dans nos pays d'Afrique.

En effet, quand nous pensons et parlons d'"Eglise", il y a une catégorie de personnes à laquelle nous faisons nécessairement allusion, même

d'une façon inconsciente. Très souvent nous entendons, ou nous posons nous-mêmes cette question: "Qu'est-ce que l'Eglise doit faire dans telle ou telle situation?" Je m'intéresse à me demander qui sont ces personnes visées? Suis-je du nombre moi-même? Les réponses à ces questions déterminent le type de spiritualité de la mission de l'Eglise au sein de nos communautés chrétiennes.

Quant à l'identité de l'Eglise, il est vrai que le Concile Vatican II avait déjà défini l'Eglise comme peuple de Dieu, incluant tous les croyants baptisés. Un peuple devenu un dans l'unité avec le Père, le Fils, et le Saint-Esprit. 'Il a plu à Dieu', dit la constitution sur l'Eglise, 'de sanctifier l'Humanité, et de la sauver non pas comme un individu isolé, coupé de tout lien, mais, la transformer en un seul peuple, un peuple qui Le reconnaît en vérité et Le sert en toute sainteté. Ainsi, il s'est choisi la race Israël comme un peuple qui lui appartient. Avec lequel il établit une alliance' (Abbott, W.M., (Ed.) *The Documents of Vatican II*, Geoffrey Chapman, London, p. 55). C'est un texte à tendance généalogique, comme pour retracer les origines de l'Eglise, comme le Peuple de Dieu.

Nous ne perdons pas de vue l'efficacité des activités apostoliques des personnes appelées "Bakambi" dans l'archidiocèse de Kinshasa, par exemple. Ce sont des laïques engagés et formés pour être pasteurs des chrétiens dans des paroisses sans prêtres.

Cette définition n'a pas aboli l'existence de la hiérarchie au sein de cette grande communauté du peuple de Dieu. Comme dans toutes les organisations humaines, il y a une place pour les droits et une autre pour les devoirs.

L'expérience vécue de certaines de nos communautés chrétiennes en Afrique, surtout au Zaïre, me pousse à dire que la notion des droits et devoirs est interprétée d'une façon assez particulière par ces peuples. L'Eglise Catholique au Zaïre est encore en quelques sorte, celle des dirigeants, c.à.d. les évêques, les prêtres, les religieux et religieuses. En disant ceci, je n'ai aucune intention de critiquer la structure ecclésiale de ce pays; je voudrais tout simplement montrer ce que le chrétien pense et dit de l'Eglise. De là découlera son comportement, par lequel est exprimé la spiritualité de l'Eglise dans ce pays.

Quelques Exemples:

1. — Lors de la Conférence Nationale Souveraine du Zaïre en 1992, dirigée par Mgr Monsengwo, il arrivait que lorsque les propositions de ce dernier plaisaient au peuple, le clergé et les religieux étaient respectés, loués même par la population, laquelle est à majorité chrétienne. Mais quand il était contesté par le CNS, ou par la présidence, le clergé était ridiculisé; les menaces de ne plus aller prier à l'église se faisaient entendre.

2. — Au moment des élections pour le poste du Premier Ministre, les paroisses et les maisons religieuses étaient menacées d'être attaquées par la population si le candidat souhaité par la majorité du peuple n'était pas élu. Car, disaient les gens, cela prouvait que les consacrés n'avaient pas bien prié. Ceci se passait surtout dans les milieux urbains.

3. — Dans les milieux ruraux, il n'est pas rare d'entendre parler de l'Eglise Catholique en termes de "Dibuundu di M'peelo" (L'Eglise des Père, en opposition à l'Eglise Protestante, appelée "Missioni" (Pour Missionnaires).

4 — L'Eglise des Pères, là où ce sont des religieux appelés "pères qui sont les porteurs de l'Evangile. Cela devient "l'Eglise des Abbés", là où nous avons les prêtres diocésains. Ce langage, si simple, si ordinaire, est révélateur de l'image de l'Eglise telle qu'elle est vue par les chrétiens eux-mêmes. Ces expressions traduisent leurs attitudes à son égard.

5. — Nous ne perdons pas de vue l'efficacité des activités apostoliques des personnes appelées "Bakambi" dans l'archidiocèse de Kinshasa, par exemple. Ce sont des laïques engagés et formés pour être pasteurs des chrétiens dans des paroisses sans prêtres. Même là, il n'est pas encore certain que la référence ne les classe pas au rang du clergé superviseur ou de la soeur assistante. Finalement, la question demeure: qui est cette Eglise dont nous parlons?

Ces exemples révèlent un certain comportement du chrétien, une façon de penser qui le/la situe en dehors de ses devoirs de baptisés au sein de l'Eglise à laquelle ils appartiennent.

Le second point qui me cause de l'embarras est de définir la spiritualité de l'Eglise dont nous venons de parler. Rappelons-nous, au risque de nous répéter, que la spiritualité est interprétée comme un aspect de la culture humaine. Comme tel, elle doit être

recherchée et trouvée à travers les événements qui incarnent et traduisent la vie authentique des personnes. C'est dans ce sens que les réactions citées plus haut ont un sens.

Il est éclairant de nous souvenir qu'en général, nos Eglises locales en Afrique sont la continuité de l'activité missionnaire (au premier sens du terme). La plupart des missionnaires sont venus des pays d'Europe, emportant avec eux/elles leurs cultures anglaises, belges, françaises, espagnoles, italiennes, portugaises.... Celles-ci ont marqué leurs fondations. Depuis quelques décennies, les autochtones ont pris la relève des diocèses et paroisses. Mais, comme dit un proverbe Koongo: "Kitutu kikala nduungu, ka kisukaa nkefu ko". (La petitealebasse qui a contenu le piment conservera toujours cet odeur piquante).

La situation devient beaucoup plus compliquée quand on se rend compte que beaucoup de ces prêtres autochtones continuent à être formés selon les traditions et les méthodes européens. Le fait d'avoir des évêques et des prêtres africains dans les diocèses et paroisses n'est pas une évidence de résoudre le problème d'enracinement dans la culture au point de parler d'une spiritualité authentiquement africaine de l'Eglise.

We are an orchestra of celebration. Each of us has a tune to play that cannot be played by another. But together we can be harmonious and impressive. Our individual tune strives to express our own local reality but we can still blend with melodies from other cultures. We have heard and learned new harmonies this week and so are encouraged to play new tunes with other players in new situations. Even when we play in completely new venues we discover the Lord of the dance alive in the heart of the audience. The possibility of new openings are countless so we are encouraged to develop new compositions.

We are aware also of discordant sounds and deafening noises in the form of repressive monetarism and dehumanising militarism which yields over-bearing globalisation promoted by unbridled transnationals. We fear these sounds could kill our music and obscure the silent song of the rose in bloom. But we draw strength from one another to play our part with increased sensitivity and new courage, but also with ears, finely tuned, to the melodies of our neighbours.

We are aware also of many others who have not been taught our music, or have been silenced or prevented from playing their part. Can we use our resources better to tutor our brothers and sisters; teach new people the songs of the Spirit or awaken those for whom the melody has died? We believe true harmony will only be achieved with an increased use of women players, even women soloists and conductors. Can we help provide new and better instruments and more inclusive orchestras?

Often our tune is “Dies Irae” when we would prefer to play “Sursum Corda”.

Il est communément reconnu que le christianisme aussi bien que l’Islam, pour n’en citer que ceux - là, n’ont pas atterri sur un terrain vide, en arrivant en Afrique. Elles ont trouvé les peuples bien ancrés dans leurs traditions et cultures. La rencontre entre chacune d’elles et les traditions africaines a abouti, à travers le processus d’acculturation, à ce que nous vivons aujourd’hui. Il ya eu du ‘donner’ et du ‘recevoir’, du laissé tomber et du conservé, introduisant des changements dans la manière de vivre et de penser des Africains (J.S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*: Doubleday & Co. N. Y. 1970: 346).

La spiritualité dont nous parlons ici, devrait être définie en tenant compte de ces changements. Nous y reviendrons quand nous parlerons d’un rituel chrétien d’expression de foi.

Quant à ce qui concerne la mission de l’Eglise à l’heure actuelle en Afrique, nous nous référons au passage de Matthieu 28, 18-20 qui nous est devenu familier quand nous parlons du sens de la mission de l’Eglise à travers le monde. En effet, c’est là où l’évangéliste dit explicitement comment Jésus a envoyé ses disciples en mission:

“Tout pouvoir m’a été donné au ciel et sur la terre. Allez donc, de toutes les nations faites des disciples, les baptisant au nom du Père, et du Fils, et du Saint Esprit, et leur apprenant à observer tout ce que je vous ai prescrit. Et

moi, je suis avec vous pour toujours, jusqu’à la fin du monde”.

Aussitôt instruits et fortifiés par l’Esprit Saint le jour de la Pentecôte, les apôtres (Pierre en tête) se sont lancés entièrement à la prédication. Nous savons bien tous jusqu’où cette prédication les a conduits: à la souffrance, la persécution, à la mort de martyrs. Leur exemple de proclamer la Bonne Nouvelle, et par là, d’adopter une vie de messager / messagère, a été très vite suivi par tant d’hommes et de femmes à travers les siècles dans l’Eglise, jusqu’à nos jours. Nous tous qui sommes ici réunis aujourd’hui faisons partie de cette catégorie de chrétiens. En ce qui concerne l’essence de la mission, je me contenterai de souligner quelques termes clés du passage cité:

ALLEZ...: C’est un ordre que Jésus donne à ses apôtres. Il le fait après avoir assuré son autorité: “tout pouvoir m’a été donné au ciel et sur la terre”. Les apôtres savaient, et nous après eux, de qui cet ordre venait. Ils sont partis, et nous partons, en son nom. C’est donc une mission de Jésus qui continue à travers nous, par la force de son Esprit Saint. Il est important

de souligner ce point pour bien nous convaincre nous-mêmes que nous sommes les serviteurs / servantes envoyés travailler dans le champ du maître.

Ici, les Bakoongo diraient, en proverbe: “*Ngola kuna masa tuumba batuumba*” que nous pouvons interpréter ainsi: la seigneurie du silence parmi les autres poissons des eaux, lui vient d’une autorité

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supérieure. Par conséquent, il n'agit pas en son nom, mais au nom de ceux et celles qui lui ont confié cette seigneurie. C'est une des conditions de base pour que le message que nous proclamons soit accueillie. Il nous faut en rendre ce témoignage, à l'exemple de Saint Paul aux chrétiens de Corinthe: "Pour moi, en effet, j'ai reçu du Seigneur ce que à mon tour je vous ai transmis... (1 Cor. 11, 23). Les Africains diraient: 'La bouche m'appartient, mais ce qu'elle dit appartient à quelqu'un d'autre'. Cette attitude implique une docilité et une fidélité au contenu du message. Le désir de Jésus, par cet ordre, est de se procurer des compagnons et compagnes de vie, ceux et celles qui le suivent pour copier sa manière de vivre, ses convictions, ses vues. Ceux et celles qui essayent de devenir ses semblables.

BAPTISANT... APPRENANT...

Les moyens pour atteindre ces objectifs sont le baptême et l'enseignement des vérités de la foi chrétienne: "Tout ce que je vous ai prescrit". Le baptême est ce qui a le plus réussi dans nos pays d'Afrique, au cours des années passées de l'évangélisation. Je veux dire par là que le pourcentage de la chrétienté s'évaluait en fonction du nombre des baptisés. Il est bien certain que toute administration du sacrement de baptême exigeait une période d'instruction afin de préparer le candidat à naître à la nouvelle vie des enfants de Dieu. Néanmoins, au fil des années, la flamme a perdu sa ferveur initiale. Dans beaucoup de cas, les déceptions ont été plus nombreuses que les témoignages de fidélité au message évangélique.

Prenons l'exemple de cette triste expérience des pillages dans presque toutes les grandes villes du Zaïre, au cours des années 1992-93 aussi bien que maintenant, en 97. Parmi les victimes, l'on comptait un bon nombre de paroisses, de maisons religieuses, de procures des missions, etc... Une fois le ton a été donné, l'action a continué à l'intérieur du pays; allant jusqu'au meurtre et au viol des religieuses. Qui ont été ces pilleurs? A côté des soldats il y avait une foule des chrétiens; ces mêmes personnes qui remplissent les églises pour les cultes chrétiens; des adhérents des groupes de prière répandus un peu partout dans les villes et les grands agglomérations. Bref, les nôtres, les chrétiens.

Ce constat a fait poser des questions et le fait encore aujourd'hui. Une des ces interrogations majeures concerne le degré de l'incarnation du message évangélique en nous et dans nos milieux de vie. Quelle est l'identité de ces personnes? Que disent-elles d'elles mêmes? Pour elles, qu'est ce que être chrétiens? Se reconnaissent-elles comme chrétiens ou seulement leur carte de baptême et le registre qui l'attestent? La liste des questions peut s'allonger indéfiniment.

Les nouvelles stratégies de l'évangélisation essayent de viser de plus en plus d'atteindre la personne entière plutôt que 'son âme'. La visée est de dépasser l'époque de 'sauver les âmes' en vue 'd'enfanter' des membres du peuple de Dieu; mieux encore, des enfants de Dieu, c'est à dire des enfants qui portent les traits de leur Père comme signe caractéristique: "Vous donc, vous serez parfaits comme votre Père Céleste est parfait (Mt. 5, 46).

Dans le cas du Zaïre, la personne que le message évangélique cherche à atteindre est justement un être en état de besoin. Notre peuple de Dieu en Afrique aujourd'hui est composé des personnes malades, des personnes victimes des luttes diverses, des personnes affamées, des malheureux. En même temps, l'espoir d'une vie meilleure caractérise ces peuples. Ils cherchent donc à se défendre, à se protéger contre les attaques des ennemis les plus redoutables, à savoir: la maladie et la mort. C'est dans cet ordre que se situe le ministère de guérison.

2. Les ministères de guérison

Beaucoup sont ceux qui considèrent la prolifération des thérapies, qui conjuguent les méthodes traditionnelles et les recours à la prière, dites de guérison, comme un résultat de nombreuses crises de nos temps. Il y a plus que cela. Le recours aux traditions peut aussi témoigner de l'attachement de l'individu ou d'une société à sa culture. En effet, si nous acceptons que la culture d'une personne est une partie indissociable de son être, nous comprenons alors que, en devenant chrétien, beaucoup d'Africains sont restés membres de leurs traditions. De ce fait, il peut y avoir des différences quant à l'interprétation des phénomènes, comme la

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maladie, la mort, la bonne santé, les malchances. Comme nous allons le voir dans le paragraphe suivant:

rites de guérison au sein de la communauté clanique. Ce sont des moyens choisis pour se libérer des emprises de ces deux grands ennemis.

Le sens de la maladie:

A) Selon l'enseignement biblique:

A travers les circonstances variées, que je ne développerai pas ici, l'enseignement biblique se force de présenter la souffrance et la maladie du beau côté, c'est à dire, en leur donnant une intention positive, telle que la participation à la souffrance du Christ, souffrir pour lui (Phil 1:29); manifestation de la gloire de Dieu (Jn 9:3; 11:40) ; et preuve pour tester le degré de fidélité à Dieu (Job), etc... La Bible nous révèle donc un Dieu qui veut sauver l'humanité pécheresse. En Jésus Christ, mort et ressuscité, Dieu répond aux interrogations humaines sur la souffrance et la maladie.

Malgré ces aspects positifs, Jésus n'avait jamais loué la souffrance ni la maladie. Il a eu pitié de ceux et celles qui en étaient des victimes. Il en a guéri beaucoup. Par cet act il leur a rendu la liberté de se réaliser, d'être eux-mêmes. Jésus a voulu guérir, remettre debout la personne toute entière. Il a guéri son corps, son esprit, ses émotions et ses relations avec les autres créatures.

B) Selon les Traditions culturelles Africaines:

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A travers des récits de la littérature orale, comme des mythes, des fables et des contes... en référence à la destinée humaine, nous découvrons cette conviction dans la destinée heureuse de toute bonne personne. Par conséquent, la souffrance, la maladie, sont des obstacles qui empêchent la personne à se réaliser. Cette vision de choses explique le sens de

Peu importe la nature de leur causes, la maladie et la souffrance représentent une certaine désintégration des éléments qui devraient assurer l'équilibre entre ces niveaux. L'intégration devient alors la base d'une guérison effective, elle revalorise la victime en lui permettant de jouer son rôle au sein du groupe.

La référence continue faite aux ancêtres et au monde invisible en général, au cours de rituels prouve que dans certains cas, la maladie, surtout la longue maladie peut être considérée comme un véhicule pour transmettre le message des ancêtres aux membres du clan. Ceci apparaît dans le cas

des services spéciaux des ancêtres à travers les rituels en honneur des *Bakulu*, chez les Bakoongo du Zaïre. La personne alors tombe gravement malade; malgré des efforts déployés par sa parenté pour le soigner, la maladie persiste. On se tournera alors vers les ancêtres, pour connaître leur volonté. A travers le rituel de *Kiziku* déjà mentionné, ceux-ci communiquent leur message à travers des symboles, des paroles, ou des actions des participants. Les experts les interprètent; le clan s'applique à la réalisation. On arrive à la guérison de ces personnes qui, dans beaucoup de cas deviennent à partir de là, des guérisseurs des autres.

En quête pour une harmonie vitale

L'interprétation de la maladie et de la guérison par les Africains va souvent de paire avec la notion que chaque peuple se fait de l'être humain. Pour le peuple Bakoongo, par exemple, l'être humain est un être complexe composé de plusieurs éléments dont certains sont visibles (le corps, le sang), d'autres, invisibles, (l'esprit, le souffle, le "coeur"). Chacun d'eux existe grâce aux relations entretenues avec les autres.

La personne humaine fonctionne sur quatre niveaux:

le corps, dans son aspect physique;

les émotions, elles influencent les actions;

la pensée rationnelle, elle contrôle l'environnement;

le centre profond de la prise de décision (M. Israël, *Healing as Sacrament: The Sanctification of the World*, London 1984:3).

Peu importe la nature de leur causes, la maladie et la souffrance représentent une certaine désintégration des éléments qui devraient assurer l'équilibre entre ces niveaux. La tendance des peuples est donc de rétablir ces rapports à tel point de créer un environnement où le développement de chacun est possible. L'intégration devient alors la base d'une guérison effective, elle revalorise la victime en lui permettant de jouer son rôle au sein du groupe. C'est en cela, qu'en quelque sorte consiste la guérison.

Quelques exemples observés lors d'une cérémonie de prières-guérisons nous aideront à mieux pénétrer la pensée des Bakoongo en ce qui concerne la maladie et la guérison.:

Lunyaakusu

Ce terme désigne la guérison aussi bien que le rite pour les guérisons. Ce rite est souvent pratiqué dans une des communautés des Eglises Chrétiennes Indépendantes. Les cas qui nous intéressent ici ont eu lieu il y a deux ans, en mai 1995, dans un village, au Zaïre.

Lunyaakusu est une des trois grandes parties des cultes dominicales dans l'Eglise connue sous le nom de Eglise Chrétienne Union du Saint Esprit, en sigle E.C.U.S.E. Les autres parties sont: *Mpedozo* ou la purification des leaders, et *Matoondo*: l'action de grâce pour tous les bienfaits reçus de Dieu durant la semaine.

Une petite pause à l'extérieur de l'église clôturait le rite de *Matoondo*. Les participants sont rentrés dans l'église pour le rite de *Lunyaakusu* (guérison) dirigé par un petit groupe de personnes choisies en avance par le pasteur de la paroisse.

Il s'agissait surtout des cas des maladie psychosomatiques, celles reconnus par le peuple comme ne pas venir de Dieu:

- N'fu*: Le cas d'une personne habitée par l'esprit d'un mort.
- Funa*: ou la malchance dans toute les activités de la vie.
- Bési masa*: Cas d'une jeune fille désignée par les ancêtres pour les représenter et les servir au sein du clan.
- N'fuiilu*: La malchance et pertes dans le commerce.

Dans les quatre cas les victimes sont regardées comme des malades; elles étaient plus malades que des personnes souffrant d'un cancer ou d'une pneumonie, car ces derniers n'attaquent que le corps tandis que les quatre personnes étaient entièrement atteintes: dans leur corps, le coeur (émotions), les relations, et l'esprit vivifiant (*mpееve kiziingu*). La guérison cherchée auprès de l'Eglise ECUSE représentait une libération des emprises qui empêchaient les victimes d'être elles-mêmes, de développer et accomplir leur leurs tâches. En plus de cela, la maladie physique (dans les trois premiers cas) a diminué leurs capacités destinées à être développées. Dans le quatrième cas, la victime n'était pas malade physiquement, mais elle craignait de le devenir sous peu, 'car', disait-elle, 'mes activités commerciales sont déjà envoûtées, il ne restent que ma famille et moi-même'. Il fallait à tout prix en être libérée.

Ces exemples nous ont montré que devant la maladie et autres difficultés sous toutes les formes, le croyant dévoile l'état de sa foi telle qu'elle est. Nous avons appris qu'en cette matière, l'attitude des chrétiens catholiques n'est pas très différente de celle décrite ci-dessus. Plus que cela, beaucoup d'entre eux sollicitent ces séances d'intercession et de guérisons pour eux-mêmes et les leurs. Comme Nicodème, certains y vont la nuit.

Très peu seraient troublés par ce comportement. Généralement parlant, les chrétiens n'y trouvent aucune opposition à la foi catholique. Ils le disent avec beaucoup de simplicité qu'ils y vont pour chercher de l'aide. Ils veulent dire par là qu'il n'y a rien qui trahisse leur foi.

Cette attitude montre jusqu'à quel point le ministère de guérisons est souhaité, recherché même dans nos Eglises locales en Afrique, à nos jours. Les peuples en ont un grand besoin pour assurer l'équilibre, l'harmonie vitale comme une personne et comme chrétien(ne).

Les objectifs des guérisons miraculeuses opérées par Jésus n'étaient pas surtout de susciter l'admiration des foules (Luc 5,26), ou de les encourager à croire en Jésus, - même si dans certaines circonstances Il a exigé un témoignage de foi. Pour Jésus, les guérisons étaient une manifestation de la compassion du Père à l'égard du peuple malade et pécheur. Son ministère de guérisons était inséparable de la proclamation de la Bonne Nouvelle. En effet, s'il est venu pour inaugurer l'établissement du royaume de Dieu dans

l'histoire, Il devait commencer par détruire le mal dans le monde et libérer les peuples des entraves de toutes les formes d'esclavage (Meehan, B., *The Healing Power of Prayer*, Ligouri Publications, Ligouri Missouri, 1988:15).

L'Eglise a été appelée à continuer la même mission de Jésus. Il serait donc normal qu'elle marche dans ses pas, sur le même sentier. Le ministère de guérisons devrait retrouver sa place à côté de la prédication de la Parole. Ainsi, pourrions-nous parler réellement de la Bonne Nouvelle du salut.

Référence:

Vumuka ku Nanga (Abbé) : “Guérison et Exorcisme: Réflexion Théologique dans une Perspective Pastorale” in *Telema*, 2 / 96.

A SPIRITUALITY OF MISSION IN AN ASIAN CONTEXT

Samuel Rayan, S.J.

We are listening to the murmur of three streams: *spirituality*, *mission* and *Asia*. We watch their flow and their confluence, and wish to respond to their mystery as best we can.

We proceed in four steps: the first three will comment on the three components of our concern — spirituality, mission and the Asian context; the fourth step will try to bring the three together.

A. Spirituality

1. The word is problematic, even dangerous. It seems to exclude material realities, and activities connected with them. It is suggestive of the immaterial, the non-bodily, the non-social, the a-historical, the interior, the other-worldly. It smacks of the dualism and docetism which bedevilled certain religious traditions, even Christian, ones, in the past. These used to advocate contempt of, and flight from, the world — from the world of matter, of the senses, of bodily needs, of the temporal and of the impermanent. Dictionaries note that “spirituality” defines spiritual as distinct from physical or material. Even *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (Wakefield, Gordon S., ed., *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, London: S.C.N., 1983) tells us that the word is used to describe “attitudes, benefits, practices which animate people’s lives and help them to reach out towards supernatural realities”. Monica Furlong, however, laments the presence at the heart of Christianity of a ‘split between sensuality and spirituality’ (Furlong, Monica, ‘Spirituality for Survival’ in *The Weight of Glory*, edited by Hardy, D.W and Sedgwick, P. H., 1991, p. 245). In 15-16th century England ‘spirituality’ stood, curiously enough, for the clergy as a distinct order of society, and even for ecclesiastical property and clergy revenue! The affluent have generally tended to equate spirituality and religion with the supernatural, and to make them cohabit comfortably with the practice of oppression, exploitation, slave trade, racism, imperial conquests, colonial repression and plunder, sexism, class divisions, market mechanisms, profiteering and limitless greed and war. This transmundane spirituality promises individual salvation, and sees no contra-

diction between the cross of Christ and the altar of Mammon.

2. A less spurious understanding of spirituality identifies it almost exclusively with explicit religion — with piety, devotion, prayer, dogmas, rites, cults and the organisation of these, or with matters pertaining to the individual soul and its salvation as distinct from matters that concern the body or the human community. Thus to pray, to meditate, to confess would be spiritual exercises, but not to act in Hamlet or to sink a tube-well for a thirsty village. The Bible or The Imitation of Christ or the congregation’s Holy Rule would constitute spiritual reading, but not The Brothers Karamazov or Travels of Marco Polo or Grimm’s Fairy Tales. Spirituality tended to be defined in opposition to the political, the economic, the social, the active, the external. It was closely associated with asceticism and with monasteries, monks and nuns. Or it was thought of as something available in *ashrams*, retreat houses or diploma courses. The result was that for many good people, for youth in particular, spirituality smelt too much of the cloister and the sacristy, or of incense and candles; it appeared to them as something abstract, something of a kill-joy, negating full-blooded life and whole-hearted involvement in the business of building a beautiful world. The mischief was due probably to misunderstanding of a Pauline phrase. Paul speaks at times of the ‘carnal’ man. By carnal Paul meant not the body as against the soul, but the whole human reality as sinful, disobedient to God, corruptible. But in a neo-platonic context it was mistaken to mean the body. And the ‘spiritual’ in Paul refers to the Holy Spirit; this too was misread as meaning human interiority. Even so some cognates of the spiritual are welcome. A ‘spirited conversation’ finds favour with everyone. It may be added that today spirituality is regaining respectability and becoming popular. It is something people seek, even travelling abroad, cloyed as they are with the shallowness of materialist affluence (Hardy, D.W. and Sedgwick, P.H., eds., *The Weight of Glory*, 1991, p. 198).

3. Nevertheless, some suggestion of dualism still clings to the word ‘spirituality’. The word has

become ambiguous and somewhat confusing. Hence we have been looking for other expressions not so much to replace spirituality altogether as to help bring out its real intent and meaning. Thus one speaks of the Godward life, or of living before God, or walking with God and with fellow creatures; or of personal union with God, or of God-consciousness. For some spirituality has to do with the ordering of our life, with the form we give to it and the fixing of priorities. Others have described it as a primordial experience of being rooted and related, as a radical sensitivity; or as that which gives meaning to human life; or as freeing oneself in order to free others; or as the love of the beautiful (*philokalia*); or as desert experience patterned on the Exodus or on Hosea 2. For Maria Teresa Porcile spirituality is “a kind of homesickness for God, for silence, beauty, prayer, liturgy, chant, theology, which becomes worship... and a way of watching the world that is being transformed into compassion and hymn, an anticipation of Jerusalem” (Porcile, Maria Teresa, in the *Ecumenical Review*, January 1986, p. 35). A. Schmeman clarifies that Christian spirituality is not simply for interior life or the inward person. It is as much for the body as for the soul, as much for society as for the individual. It consists in implementing the two commandments of loving God and neighbour, the neighbour including nature (Schmemmann, A., *Of Water and the Spirit*, 1976, p. 107). W. Pannenberg presents spirituality as a progressive realisation of the Gospel of transformative affirmation of the human person and human history by God’s love (Pannenberg, W., *Christian Spirituality*, 1983, p. 108f). Prophet Micah, if asked, would reply that spirituality consists in acting justly, loving tenderly and walking humbly with the God of us all (cf. Mi 6:8). Or, in Jesus’ phrase, to be spiritual is ‘to think the things of God’, to think as God thinks and live accordingly (cf. Mt 16:23).

4. For some spirituality is essentially relational. It is a relationship between disciple and master between the devotee and her/his personal God. “A relationship of intimacy”, says J. H. Kroeger, “is at the heart of biblical spirituality” (Kroeger, James H., in *Verbum SVD*, 31/3, 1990, p. 259; *Living Mission* 1994, p. 21; cf. Ex 19:4-6; Lv 26:12). He describes spirituality as a “human-divine drive operative in our

lives”, and speaks of it in terms of growth processes and evolution towards maturity. Spirituality has to do with expanding horizons of spiritual awareness or God-consciousness or faith-life” (cf. Kroeger, 1994, p. 22). Mary Grey, quoting Martin Buber, notes that “the fundamental category of existence is relationality”; that is “a mutuality, a dynamism, a responsiveness expressed in a myriad of different ways” (Grey, Mary, *Redeeming the Dream. Feminism, Redemption and Christian Tradition*, London, SPCK, 1989, p. 84). With Thomas Merton spirituality’s accent falls on transformation of conscience from a self-centred state to an other-centred condition; “one’s self is no longer one’s own centre; it is now centred on God” (cf. Kroeger, 1994, p. 23). Elizabeth S. Fiorenza is strong on relationality. “The focal point”, she writes, “of early Christian self-understanding was not a holy book, or a cultic rite, not mystic experiences and magic invocations but a set of relationships: the experience of God’s presence among one another and through one another...”. Consequently Christian spirituality came to mean “eating together, sharing together, drinking together, talking with each other, receiving each other, experiencing God’s presence through each other, and, in doing so, proclaiming the Gospel as God’s alternative vision for everyone, especially for those who are poor, outcast and battered” (Fiorenza, Elizabeth S., *In Memory of Her, A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, New York: Crossroads, 1983, p. 345).

By Spirit the Bible means most of the time not the human soul but the Holy Spirit of God. Spiritual is what the Holy Spirit creates, initiates, inspires, gives, guides, sustains, blesses, approves, animates, accepts and rejoices over. All creation then is radically spiritual.

5. Others apparently overlook relationality, and place spirituality in the very structure and dynamism of the Human: in human freedom and creativity and the ability to transcend self. Thus we are told that all human beings are spiritual, whether believers or not. All “have an area where they are free for transcendence with new possibilities at the centre of their being where they can make a total response with will, intellect and feelings” (cf. Hardy and Sedgwick, p. 198). Michael C. Reilly sees the human being as spiritual because this being is an embodied spirit with reflexive consciousness, critical thought and creative self-expression. “Spirituality is the interior life of the human knower-doer. The inner life makes it possible for one to express oneself in symbols of culture, to think, meditate, wonder, plan, project, achieve, critique, innovate and self-sacrifice” (Reilly, Michael C., *Spirituality for Mission*, Manila, 1976, p. 22). Spirituality therefore is the basic,

practical, existential attitude of human beings which is the consequence and expression of the way in which they understand their existence and the meaning of reality. It is the way they act or react throughout life according to ultimate objectives which flow from their world view. "Christian spirituality" is the way one lives according to one's vision of faith in the Creator God who assumed the world and its history to God-self in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, crucified and raised ... in the Spirit" (cf. Reilly, p. 24). For M. M. Thomas "human spirituality is the way in which one, in the freedom of self-transcendence, seeks a structure of ultimate meaning and sacredness within which one can fulfil or realise oneself in and through one's involvement in the bodily, the material and the social realities and relations of one's life on earth" (Thomas, M.M., 'Salvation Today. A Personal Statement', in *Salvation Today*, edited by Arne Sovik. Minn. 1973, p. 95).

6. That brings us to the core of the question. Spirituality is life in the Spirit, living by the Breath of God. By Spirit the Bible means most of the time not the human soul but the Holy Spirit of God. Spiritual is what the Holy Spirit creates, initiates, inspires, gives, guides, sustains, blesses, approves, animates, accepts and rejoices over. All creation then is radically spiritual: the earth and the sky, birds and beasts, women and men are all spiritual from their foundations and in their essential openness to the Spirit's influence. This perception is vital for all authentic and holistic understanding of spirituality which would avoid all dualist and docetist pitfalls. This view provides a necessary horizon for all further interpretation and application of spirituality. But it has its limitations too. It spells out the Spirit's role and activity rather than the part we, humans, are to play in the history of our life in the Spirit. It needs to be supplemented; or, rather, this rich description of spirituality spoken from the side of the Spirit needs now to be told from our side.

7. That may be done by stating that to be spiritual is to be open to reality and responding to it relevantly and as adequately as possible. From the perspective of human praxis, life in the Spirit is defined in terms of openness and responsiveness to reality. Reality is to be understood inclusively: it embraces everything from sand and grass, through singing birds and tigers 'burning bright in the forests of the night'; through the solar systems and the furthest constellations in an expanding universe, through the complex and structured universe within

each molecule, to the world of thought and grief and love and brokenness in the depths of human hearts, to the hunger and misery and tears of women and men, to the experience of forgiveness, and on to the Ultimate Mystery of life and love we call God, Brahman, Allah. To be spiritual is to be open to these realities, to all of them, to any of them, and to all further possibilities, rejecting none, shutting out nothing. Openness means listening to the other, to the depth and the silence of things and events, refusing to close the door to possibilities however unfamiliar, unpalatable, challenging and disturbing. Openness means being ready for the surprise of history and of the cosmos. Materialism is a prejudiced option for narrowness while fairy tales affirm that nothing given within our experience exhausts the possibilities of the real. To be open is to let reality come in all its beauty, ugliness, wonder, terror; let it come, invade our life, touch us in depth, affect us, awaken us, gladden us, wound us, and move us to joy, to song, to sorrow, to tears, to anger, to action. To relevant action, action that responds to reality and its actual condition, affirming, fostering, negating, resisting, subverting, transforming as the case may require. 'Response-ability' will address not only reality's present but its past as well and its future; it will speak to the personal no less than to the structural. To be spiritual is to be open and responsive to the reality of the earth, of history, of life, of people, of the Spirit.

8. The parable of the Samaritan (cf. Lk 10:29-37) could illustrate the point. Two men of religion, two cult persons, a priest and a Levite, came along, saw the traveller lying on the roadside, stripped, robbed, beaten, bleeding to death; they saw and passed by. Then came along a non-Jew, a non-believer, a Samaritan, someone the cult persons despised. He too saw what the priest had seen, and he responded in a way the priest had not. Moved with compassion he went up to the dying man, bandaged his wounds, lifted him on to his own mount, took him to the nearest inn and arranged for him to be looked after unto health and wholeness at the Samaritan's own expense. That was openness, showing his ability to respond; that was neighbourly love, and authentic faith and true religion and spiritual worship. It was a more relevant response than the priest's even if we imagine that the priest was perhaps hastening to the temple to pray for the bandits' victim. The priest was not open: he did not respond. What the Samaritan did was. And Jesus said to the learned Jews, "Go then and do the same"

(cf. Lk 10:37), follow the Samaritan, take a lesson in religion from him.

Au terme de ces journées, qu'en est-il pour nous de la spiritualité de la mission?

Sans doute, savons-nous un peu mieux ce qu'elle est? ...Une qualité d'attention.

*** Attention à la présence de l'autre, de celui qui est différent, et surtout du pauvre, de l'opprimé. -**

*** Attention au Dieu présent en toutes choses, à l'esprit de Jésus agissant avant nous et par nous.**

Et pourtant ce que nous avons reçu ici, n'est pas de l'ordre du savoir, mais de l'expérience - une expérience de disciples à l'écoute des témoins de Jésus.

Nous sommes devenus les uns par les autres des apprentis de l'évangile pour la justice dans ce monde d'aujourd'hui.

Et maintenant?

Comme Jésus, pris de compassion pour la foule de ceux qui étaient comme des brebis sans berger, nous

attendrons l'appel de ceux auprès desquelles nous sommes envoyés.

Ils sont là à notre porte.

Saurons-nous nous laisser déplacer, décentrer de nous même?

Entendrons-nous la parole de Jésus?

“Donnez-leur vous-même à manger”?

One could multiply illustrations of authentic spirituality from the Bible, but they are also illustrations of spirituality for mission. So we shall postpone telling the stories till a word has been said about mission.

B. Mission

9. The “Go and do the same” of the Samaritan story is a mission word; and the spirituality which the story depicts in terms of broken humanity, of religion's indifference, of Gentile sensitivity and wine, oil, money, humanity, responsibility and love, portrays faithfully the authentic face of a spirituality of mission.

Traditionally Mt 28:18-20 has been honoured and obeyed as the Lord's great missionary mandate. But debates and hesitations described in the Acts prove that the Matthean passage is not a word of Jesus inaugurating a world mission; it is a word of the early Church setting forth the happy conclusion of early Christian controversies. The fact is that Jesus confined his ministry and that of his disciples to the house of Israel and its lost sheep (Mt 10:5-6; Mk 7:26-27; Acts 10:11). But we are not left without direct mission words from Jesus. ‘Go and do the same’ of the Samaritan story is one such word. Another, absolutely central and decisive, is Jesus' love commandment: I give you a new commandment: love one another; you must love one another just as I have loved you (cf. Jn 13:34).

This mission word of Jesus sums up all his teachings and synthesises the meaning of his life and death. To love is the ministry and mission of the disciples; it is to be the distinctive mark of the Church: “It is by your love for one another that everyone will recognise you as my disciples” (Jn 13:35). The commandment is then repeated with a dynamic Trinitarian structure: there is the Father, there is Jesus, and their shared Love reaching out to draw us in: “I have loved you just as the Father has loved me... This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you... My commandment to you is to love one another” (Jn 15:9, 12, 17).

And the love is to be made real in concrete relevant service to, and acceptance of responsibility for, one another: “If I have washed your feet, you also must wash one another’s feet” (Jn 13:14; Mk 10:41-45).

But that ‘one another’ should not harden into a closed circle: the disciples are not to become a ghetto. We are commissioned to break out of circles and let our love and service spread far and wide to transform the world. The mission word is, Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you (Mt 5:44) Disclose a new way of life, a new style of relationship, a new set of values, a new economic practice, and take the world by surprise.

To one who hits you on the right cheek, offer the other as well; to one who takes you to law to get your tunic, give your cloak as well; and if anyone requires you to go one mile, go two miles with him (cf. Mt 5:39-42).

A non-believer, saw what the priest had seen, and he responded in a way the priest had not. Moved with compassion he went up to the dying man, bandaged his wounds, lifted him on to his own mount, took him to the nearest inn and arranged for him to be looked after unto health and wholeness at the Samaritan’s own expense. That was openness, showing his ability to respond.

That gratuitous mile, after walking the one forced on you by fear or agreed upon by you for money, will be the surprise mile, the Gospel mile, and the meaning and manner of the mission of grace. For if

we love only those who love us or are loveable what is there in our behaviour that is exceptional and surprising? Anyone could do that independently of the Gospel mission and the wondrous news about Jesus. Follow therefore the Father’s ways. His justice-love does the surprising thing in giving to everyone sun and rain, earth and food; in giving not what we deserve, but what we need in order to exist and become great. These words describe the mission and its method, and bear a mission spirituality.

10. Akin to this is the command in Mt 5:23-24 about interrupting cult to give priority to the Gospel task of community-building, peace-making and reconciling, and laying the foundations of a new, beautiful world (cf. Mt 5:8; 2 Cor 5:17-19). Similarly the blessing pronounced on those who hunger and thirst for justice (Mt 5:6) and struggle on the side of the victims of iniquitous economic, political and social systems, carries a missionary mandate. All the beatitudes are in fact mission words indicating with whom the bearers of the Gospel are to stand, what values and goals they are to pursue, to what visions and dreams they are to win the people over, what life style they ought to adopt, and what price they may have to pay for discipleship. The point is made clear in the mission mandate which concludes this section: You are salt for the earth to preserve it from decay and give it new flavour and vigour; You are light to the world, sent to shine in people’s sight, so that seeing your good works and your surprising way of life people may burst into praise of the Father (cf. Mt 5:13-16).

Matthew is a missionary Gospel with a global perspective beginning from the genealogy (ch. 1), through the Magi story (ch. 2), and the story of the Light breaking into the shadows of Gentile existence (4:12-17), through Jesus’ self-identification with the deprived (8:20; 25:31-46), and the cosmic phenomena which mark Jesus’ death (27:51-54) on to the world mission at the end (28:18-20). The Sermon on the Mount is a formal charter of the mission. We wish to call attention to two more points in this charter. The first is the *Our Father* (6:9-13). This prayer says that the mission’s goal is the Father’s glory when encounter with God’s reality will be experienced as meaningful, life-giving and liberating. It says that the mission is at the service of God’s Reign. The values and dynamics of that Reign, which is older and larger than the Church, will shape and guide the mission. At the heart of the prayer stands not just the Reign of God, but the Reign and the Earth — the Reign as it comes to the Earth touching and transforming it, and the Earth as

the place where the Reign is realised through the doing of God's will, the implementation of God's designs. The second part of the prayer spells out some specifics of the Reign, some concrete ways of doing God's will. The prayer calls for a radical revamping of our systems of social fragmentation and social gaps. It demands the fashioning of fellowship in which everybody's right to daily bread, daily rice, daily share in resources required to live with dignity and to participate creatively in history's processes will be met and honoured. As a prayer, the *Our Father* is an act of commitment to a programme of action to remake the world.

The second point we wish to touch upon in the mission charter is found in Mt 7:21-23. It re-emphasises the doing of God's will, stressed already in the *Our Father*. It warns us against misunderstanding the mission as an exercise in religious rhetoric. Mission seeks to discover and unite people committed to God's designs for the earth, to win more people for God's cause, to urge and aid people to practice what would change our hearts and our world into something beautifully human. It will not do then merely to get people to say or sign Creeds while the basic structures of the heart and of society continue unaltered and unchallenged. The language of proclamation and preaching found in Matthew and Mark begins to change in Luke and is replaced in John with *martyrion*, bearing witness to the Gospel with life, even with death, and not merely with words. The change in terminology is significant. Significant too is Jesus' reference to baptism. Discipleship consists in our participation in the Baptism which Jesus receives. And Jesus' baptism consists in his unconditional commitment to the cause of the Reign of God even if that should cost him his life (Mk 10:38-39; Lk 12:49-50). We are warned not to reduce Baptism to a water rite, and not to overlook the few or the many baptised into the paschal mystery who live and serve outside the institutional Churches.

11. The Fourth Gospel too is a mission Gospel. The mission theme is implied in the announcement of the coming into the world of the Word-Light that enlightens everyone (Jn 1:9). It is present in the work of the Baptist and the role played by Andrew and Philip in the same opening chapter. It underlies the language of witnessing which occurs throughout the work. It becomes explicit in Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman and in the apostolate she undertakes. It is Jesus' life-giving and liberating mission that chapters 5 to 11 present. Jesus describes

himself so often as the One the Father has sent. Chapter 17, described at times as a priestly prayer, is in fact a mission prayer. As the Sent One, Jesus can say and do only what the Sender has commanded him to. And this is the mission of Jesus: to convince the world that God so loved it as to give his only Son for its healing and wholeness. We have seen how the Son extends to us the love he himself receives from the Father, and how he would have us extend it to the world. The commission comes to a climax in the concluding chapter of John when the Risen Christ breathes on his disciples and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit, as the Father has sent me, I send you" (Jn 20:20-23).

The Father is the ultimate Sender. The mission is God's. God sends the Son and the Spirit, and through the Son in the Spirit God sends forth creation. The overall mission of the created universe is to be a translation, in the language of matter and motion and energy and beauty, of the eternal Word of God. Its mission is to be a revelation, a manifestation and proclamation of God's face and mind, of God's beauty and wisdom, of God's power and wonder, and of God's inmost reality as love (Rom 1:19-20; Wis 13:1-9). Creation's mission is to bear witness to God, that God is present and God cares (Acts 14:15-17). A psalmist had realised that the heavens do declare the glory of God and proclaim his handiwork, that day declares of it to day, and night to night hands on the knowledge (Ps 19:1-4). In this overall mission of creation, each particular reality has a share. Each is on a mission to the rest. Every creature has something special, some gift, some experience, some promise or challenge or good news for its fellow creatures. God's varied gifts are so distributed that creatures need not only God but each other within an intricate web of cosmic interdependence, of give and receive, of mission and ministry. This is so because creation has its roots in the Trinitarian Mission within the Divine.

12. All this is true not only of God's creation but of human cultures as well. No culture, no race, no language, no age or system can exhaustively realise all human possibilities and all of life's promises. The perceptions and achievements of each age, race and culture have their limitations and differences. They are meant to complement, supplement, each other, to seek and meet each other across time and space, and thus progressively to come to understand and achieve the Human. Every culture has something to learn from other cultures, and something to offer to them as well.

Does not the same hold also for religions? God speaks to every group and age, and communicates with them in a variety of sounds and symbols. Divine gifts and graces are not concentrated and heaped up in any one place or time or in a single human group or spiritual experience or religious tradition. None of these exhausts the truth of God, nor the truth of the relationship God builds with us, nor the truth of the human predicament, nor of the human heart, nor of the dreams God has lodged in it. Every religious tradition is partial and imperfect, and has a share in distorting God's message and disfiguring God's face, and wrecking God's work in history. God speaks to each through the rest. God places in many hands and hearts gifts needed by and meant for all. God sends each to its neighbour to learn its own name. For no religion is meant to be an island, separate and self-sufficient. All the religious and spiritual traditions need each other's word of revelation, reassurance, challenge, correction, promise and assistance. The achievements of each tradition, its symbols, saints, scriptures, art and insights belong to all to the extent they are life-promoting and liberating. They must be respectfully sought, offered, received, assimilated, integrated and lived for the benefit of the human family and its earth-home. That is mission.

Without love faith would be dead; and dogmas, laws, authority claims and submissions could only be hurtful. Love is the point of the mission, the meaning of the Church, and the core of being human, being Christian.

And Christian mission must be located and lived within these larger horizons of the interdependence and mutuality of missioning and good newsing among the religions, the cultures and the various spheres and phenomena in creation. Inter- and intra-cosmic, cultural and religious dialogue is the context and method of mission today. Spirituality for mission would consist in openness to the missionary dimensions of creatures, cultures and religions and in 'response-able' dialogue with concrete given realities.

C. THE ASIAN CONTEXT

13. Asia is people. The continent carries over 60 per cent of the human race, that is, nearly two thirds of world population though it is only 15 per cent of

the planet's land surface. Asians comprise a variety of races and ethnic groups, many families of languages and a multiplicity of cultures. Organisationally too the continent exhibits a bewildering pluralism. Politically you will find on the continent parliamentary democracies with or without kings; and dynastic kingly rule; and one party Governments; and military regimes and one-man rule verging on dictatorship. Economically, the feudal landlord system continues in many regions; millions therefore are tenants or landless agricultural workers; this system is used by liberal capitalism and market economy which in recent years have been tightening their grip over the continent; imbalances and disparities are on the increase among the Asian countries and within each nation. Centrally planned economies too exist, and there are remnants of indigenous egalitarian traditions, as well as small hesitant movements for authentic, participative socialism. Politically and economically conflict situations abound both internationally and intranationally as between India and Pakistan, the two Koreas, Iraq and Kuwait, as in Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, North-East India, Burma, the Philippines, Indonesia, Kampuchea etc. Socially there are several Asias: the super rich, the rich and the middle class, the poor and the destitute. This class division is compounded by casteism or its kin racism, strong in South Asia, but not unknown in the East.

14. There are however some seven factors on the Asian scene which should command the attention of Christian mission and which have some bearing on the question of spirituality of mission on the continent.

a) Asia is religion. It is the birth place and home of nearly all the scripture religions of the world. Judaism, Christianity and Islam originated in West Asia; Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism came to birth in South Asia; Confucianism, Taoism and Shintoism belong with East Asia. There are also the primal religions of indigenous peoples, with traditions not yet imprisoned in written texts. Note that people with sacred scriptures rarely change religious affiliation. Note also that Christians of all denominations add up to about 2 per cent of Asia's population; about half of them are in one country, the Philippines. The most noteworthy fact is that Asians in general have an all-embracing sense of the transcendent and of the depth and mystery of things.

b) Vast masses of the people are economically poor. Now if we recall the biblical truth that the poor are God's first concern, then we must recognise with

Aloysius Pieris that the majority of God's poor are outside the Christian Churches.

c) Among the major historical causes of Asian poverty are:

- i) age-long exploitation by feudal and royal rulers;
- ii) conquest, subjugation and plunder of Asian lands and the hijacking of their history and culture mainly by European and American Christians. The Churches have often supported or connived at the colonial adventure in view of possible evangelisation of the "pagan" and of Church expansion.
- iii) introduction of development models designed in the West have proved to be anti-poor and ecologically disastrous.

d) All Asian lands except Japan and partly Thailand, are ex-colonies. Their economy shaped by colonial powers and made subservient to imperial interests, continue, even after apparent political independence, to be controlled and used by the West's powerful institutions like the WB, the IMF and the WTO which intervene and dictate directly or through the MNCs and colonially educated local *élite* and through the media invading from the skies. Hong Kong alone has more than 1,000 U.S. companies with an investment of about \$ 13 billion and employing 250,000 workers; and about 40,000 U.S. nationals live in Hong Kong (*The Hindu*, 5 May 1997, quoting Hong Kong's *Economic Journal*).

e) Note the permanent presence of the U.S. military in Japan and Korea for some half a century now, and more recently in the Gulf countries, and the 'Voice of America' in Sri Lanka. Asia remembers with disquiet the U.S. conquest and colonisation of the Philippines, the dropping of nuclear bombs on two Asian cities, and the invasion of Vietnam and its gratuitous destruction.

f) Most Asian Churches have been colonially planted, and wear a foreign face. Attempts at inculturation and indigenisation of the Church, made by missionaries with a vision, have been officially scuttled as in the case of the Chinese rites, the Malabar rites and of Upadhyay's moves. Our Churches have been West Asian or West European in liturgy, art, law, and for a good part of their history, in leadership.

g) More positively, there are movements, small but widespread and significant, all over Asia, both in society and in the Churches, which are carefully critiquing the existing systems, exploring alternatives in economics and politics, experimenting in authentic self-rule and socialism to replace capitalism's pseudo-democracies and their endemic corruption. They take lessons in equality and co-operation from the history of indigenous peoples, and mobilise to challenge the dehumanising culture of consumerism, technocracy and State power. And they work to shape free and responsible, culturally integrated local churches and theologies, and to foster the new awakening of women, youth and lay people.

D. A SPIRITUALITY OF MISSION IN AN ASIAN CONTEXT

15. In our praxis-definition, spirituality consists in being open and responsive to reality. A spirituality of mission in an Asian context calls for openness and responsiveness to the message and mystery of Jesus and to the reality of Asia. It would consist in contemplating Asia with eyes that have looked on the crucified and raised Jesus; it would consist in traversing in spirit and affection the length and breadth of the continent, visiting her peoples and her cultures; it would consist in taking Asia to our heart, and letting her rivers flow through us, her winds blow in the halls of our minds, her perfumes of lotus and Joss sticks waft in our spirits, and her mountains and trees rise within us like the earth's prayer heaving to the everlasting Mystery of Life and Love. Mission spirituality begins with loving Asia, carrying her in our heart, cherishing her features, nursing her wounds, and believing in her future.

i) Christ's sent ones will in the first place be with the Asian people, close to their reality, irrespective of colour, culture and creed, loving them for themselves, for what they are and what they can become; knowing that the lowliest and the least among them is a person in the likeness of God, and is far more precious than abstract truths, rituals, laws, taboos, and authority claims. For spirituality refers to that dimension of the human which the Bible points to when it speaks of the person as made in God's image; as called by God and engaged in conversation; and as questioned by God and challenged and made capable of an answer; as commissioned by God to till the earth and keep it, and to name things and name each other, to liberate the enslaved, to let justice flow like a river, and to go

on imagining and creating the new and the beautiful; as capable especially of dreams and visions, and of loving deeply even to the giving of one's life for friends. The people are spiritual in their struggles for daily rice, in their devotion to their children, in their love for one another, in their simple prayers, their trust in God, and the responsibility they assume for new generations of people. Responding to people with respect and warmth of affection is both evangelising activity and mission spirituality.

ii) Our missioning faith educates us to be responsive to the fact that God has never left these or any other people without evidence concerning God's own Self — that God is present and that God cares, 'sending them rain from heaven and seasons of fruitfulness', and 'filling them with food and their hearts with merriment' (Acts 14:17-18). To be responsive also to the fact that God has always been speaking to the people and disclosing God's heart in the symbolic language of creation (Rom 1:19-20); as well as to the truth of the divine law engraved in people's hearts (Rom 2:15).

iii) The missionary's openness will look upon Asian peoples' history as sacred, as salvation history, as included in and encompassed by God's universal saving design. God is the liberator and leader not only of Israel but of the Philistines and the Aramaeans as well (Am 9:7); God is the God of Job, the Edomite; God is a God who anoints Cyrus the Persian Messiah to shepherd Israel (Is 45:1-7).

iv) The mission may not be understood in terms of bringing God or of giving Christ to Asia. The mission will rather be a humble attempt to sense God's presence among the people and to discern what God has been doing here down the ages, and continues to do; the graces and charisms with which God has enriched each nation; the saints God has raised, the faith God has sustained, the justice God has promoted; the social transformations God has led, making for greater freedom, fuller life and finer fellowship. The mission is here to discern this and give thanks. This Eucharist is a major part and task of the mission.

v) The mission will learn to accept the sacred scriptures of all the religions as God's Word, spoken to God's family in Asia, gifts meant for the whole of God's human family everywhere. Asian Christians' collection of sacred writings will be much larger than that of their fellow Christians in Europe, just as today in the West the Catholic Bible is a little larger than the Protestant Bible. But finally all of us will,

hopefully, come to know the gift of God and drink the living water from all the fountains of the Saviour (cf. Jn 4:10). Rejection of Asia's sacred heritage and official ban on their use in Christian liturgy argue closed attitudes and lack of sensitivity which contradict biblical traditions and exclude spirituality.

vi) The Risen Christ who goes ahead of the Apostles to Galilee (Mk 16:7), has by centuries preceded the missionary into Asia. In the first place, he is Asian by birth. Secondly he who identifies with the hungry and the homeless (Mt 25:31-46), is surely there where the destitute masses of Asia struggle to survive. Discover the Christ of Asia and stand by him to work with him for the liberation of the poor.

vii) The affluent world claims to have the Christ. A Christ with or without the cross? Asia surely has the cross, and the likelihood is that the Crucified One is on it. Ours to stand beneath Asia's cross in the company of Jesus' mother. Ours to touch, with Thomas, the wounds of the people and come to recognise 'my Lord and my God' (cf. Jn 20:24-28). Mission spirituality takes the form of solidarity with the poor of Asia, and participation in their movements and struggle for food, freedom, dignity and community.

viii) Mission in Asia will weep with Jesus over the death of Asia's children from starvation and deprivation caused by the development policies of the greedy and the powerful. Missioners will gather into the chalice of their heart the tears of Asia's poor, and hold it up for God to see and bless and transform into a cup of abundant life.

ix) Meanwhile we shall miss no opportunity to name the Name of him who opted to be poor with the poor, to be homeless, to be a rejected stone, and the suffering Servant of all. Name the Holy One who is present and gives meaning and value to people's wounds and sighs, who plants the seeds of the resurrection in the heart of our death. We name him with humility; we present him as our love and our treasure, and not as a hammer with which to threaten people and smash skulls. We present Jesus in his *kenosis* and his love and in the solidarity of the Resurrection, as a friend of the people and a giver of freedom, and not as a religious Julius Caesar out to conquer, destroy and dominate.

x) While academic criticism (historical, redactional, etc.) of scriptures and theologies will have their place in Asia, the real criticism will come from the poor of Asia. The technical expertise of scholars will be needed and appreciated. But the vital (or

fatal, as the case may be) criticism comes from the situation of poverty and oppression, of militarism and occupation by foreign armies and their multinationals; real criticism will come from the situation of subtle and not so subtle domination and exploitation of our lands, resources and peoples by those who through four to five centuries of plunder have amassed enough of wealth and weapons by which to control life globally. Mission spirituality will know what critical voices to heed and what to set aside.

xi) It is the poetry of the people, their intuition into the conditions of life and love, the insights of women, the wisdom and genius of the creators of Asia's languages that will bring the best criticism to the fore. Their critical work is an essential ingredient of mission.

xii) Mission spirituality in Asia will be glad to pray with the people, the villagers, the workers, the women, the peasants, the illiterate — in the medium of their words, songs and symbols, their *bhajans* and *kirtans*, and especially their silences which echo, and convey us into, that Eternal Silence from which the Word, the *Vac*, the *Sabdabrahman*, is born.

The group recognised that through prayer, open sharing and the sensitive listening a bond of trust and understanding had grown over these days. It was felt that the input on the themes of globalisation, mission and culture stimulated and provoked thought which provided a framework on which to share our experiences of mission.

Having at first been a bit overwhelmed by the reality of global economic structures it was acknowledged that religious institutes also reflect an aspect of the globalisation of our world. The aspect of culture related through the African experience challenged the group to reflect on how we will do "mission" in the next millennium. The reflections on mission from Samuel Rayan's sharings situated the perspective of mission spirituality for the group.

We note three areas of concern:

1. How do we continue to educate ourselves about the globalisation of economic structures so as to make a responsible contribution toward transformation? E.g. responsible investments, trained people who can give advice, network ecumenically and welcome inter-faith collaboration.

2. Training of missionaries in these realities is key. Because faith and culture are living entities so enculturation is an ongoing process. How do we help returning missionaries reintegrate into their home cultures was also a point of concern.

3. How do we assure that responsible action flows from our fruitful conversations over these days?

xiii) Mission spirituality will be more concerned with presenting the Gospel embodied in life-witness rather than in verbal proclamation. It knows that people pay greater attention to witnesses than to teachers. It will seek to overcome what Kosuke Koyama has diagnosed the Churches to be suffering from: namely, a teacher complex, a heated pre-occupation with culturally correct terminology rather than with divinely right living, loving and relating. Being and doing in their dialectical interplay will matter far more than talking.

xiv) Here let us hold up four New Testament symbols which embody the reality and the mystery both of mission and of spirituality. The symbols are light, salt, yeast and fragrance (cf. Mt 5:13-16; 13:33; cf. 2 Cor 2:14-16). Mission consists in the light the missioning community spreads by the newness and beauty of its life; and in the salt-quality the community has in order to keep the world from rotting in the mire of violence and vulgarity. Believers are called to be a powerful leaven capable of transforming hearts and structures, and make the earth become fine bread for the feast of God, the feast of people. We are the fragrance of Christ. That is our mission and mission spirituality. Through us and through all believers God “is spreading everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of himself”. Gandhi is reported to have said to a group of Christian missionaries: “You talk too much. Look at the rose. It too has a gospel to spread. It does it silently, but effectively, and people come to it with joy. Imitate the rose”.

xv) The mission will celebrate with and for the people. Their openness and responsibility will keep faith with the memory of Jesus as far as the central significance of the liturgy is concerned. But the historical flesh of the celebration will come from the missionary’s and the community’s ability to respond to the local culture with its poetry, music and myths, its lamps, flowers and fruits, its dances and salutations, and its companionship, eating bread and rice together.

xvi) Mission spirituality places us on the side of justice. Efforts to let justice flow like a river is far more vital, spiritual, divine than temple liturgies and solemn ritual performances (cf. Am 5:23-24). Educating ourselves and the people in a growing experience of grace and in a sense of the gratuitousness of life, earth, culture and friendships will be the spiritual path that leads to commitment to justice issues in the home, the village, the city, in international trade, in the cancellation of debts, in voluntary disarmament and in joyful sharing. The spirituality of mission is essentially a spirituality of abounding grace. The mission urges us to stand in all our weakness before God on the side of the poor and place our resources at their disposal in the battle against evil in ourselves, in the environment, in the world. Bishop Paulose Mar Paulose observes that “underneath this commitment of the people for justice, there is a new human yearning for God, or for that which the symbolic word ‘God’ stands for. I call it spirituality. Every human life seems to need and want spiritual integrity, the ability to know and worship that which is ultimately real and which creates and recreates us in its own image. This cultural hunger, even at this moment, is calling us ... to new frontiers, new shapes and forms, as we seek to respond to the human quest for justice” (in *Info*, Manila).

Encounter with the poor of God and with Jesus in the poor in their total life and death experience is the basic Christian mysticism, and the spirituality of the people who live in symbiosis with the mystery of life.

xvii) Mission spirituality is interior to our common quest, our common question, “Master, where do you live”? Jesus responds with a ‘Come and see’, and he takes us to where the victims of our great systems struggle to survive: the slums, the Dalit villages, the abused women and children, the starving people. That is where Jesus lives. We are spiritual if we opt to stay with him there in the heart

of misery and squalor, ready to act in order to change things into something human.

xviii) Mission spirituality resembles the intense awareness and concern of women about any shortage of wine, bread, rice, joy, life and honour in Church and society (cf. Jn 2:3-10). It is like their determined stand close to the Crucified in defiance of palace and temple; close to the wounded, battered, broken body of humanity in measureless compassion and love. Mission spirituality is like the women returning from the tomb with words of hope and a story of life and a dance of joy, though sombre men fail to understand or appreciate it (cf. Jn 20). Spirituality is where women are discovering the Saviour of the world right in the midst of their daily chores, and turn apostles themselves and bring people to the Well, to the Spring of life, to the mystical Waters (cf. Jn 4). Spirituality is like women weeping over the death of their loved ones and discovering a weeping compassionate God standing close to their tearful lives and bidding death surrender its prey (cf. Jn 11).

xix) The spirituality of Mary, Mother of Jesus, reveals the heart of mission spirituality in Asia. From the beginning Mary is associated with the *kenosis* of God's Son, and with the Saviour's smallness, poverty and social insignificance. She is actively concerned about the possible embarrassment of a poor family which could not afford enough wine even for a wedding feast, the only celebration in the life of the poor. When her son is arrested, mocked, stripped, tortured, disowned, humiliated and reduced to nothing, Mary stands close to his cross, supportive of his options, appreciative of his way of life and participative in his destiny. Her *Magnificat* depicts dramatic contrasts between the proud, the rich, the mighty and the enthroned on the one hand and the lowly, the poor, the hungry on the other. She has herself experienced the stark contrast between her defenceless Baby and Herod the killer king; between the Wise Men and the same Herod; between her lowly family and the distant Cæsar who issues edicts to facilitate the collection of more taxes; between her crucified Son and the power of palace and temple. Mary's *Magnificat*, that 'song of high revolt', leaves us in no doubt as to whose side she takes and what kind of a subversive God she celebrates.

xx) Monica Furlong reminds us that "any spirituality worth its salt is going to be profoundly taken up with ecological concern". This concern may be dictated by fear of the planet's doom. But actually we ought to be gripped by "a powerful sense of grief". Furlong believes that "we may need to recog-

nise a process of mourning going on within us for so much that is lost and destroyed — for people dying of starvation, for the death of creatures, forests, oceans, for the heart-breaking loss of what is innocent, beautiful, helpless" (cf. Furlong, pp. 243-44). To care not for the heart but for money and to be preoccupied with power, success, consumer goods and speed is to be unspiritual. The contrary, to be spiritual, is costly. It is costly to go counter to capitalist pre-suppositions, to the pull of the market, and to be an oddity like the early Christians. But our fears and defences can dissolve when we perceive ourselves as ecosystems and keep the parts working in harmony with one another, to maintain a delicate equilibrium with other ecosystems. "Our spirituality, our growth, our prayer, began with a loving and gentle care of ourselves and a loving and gentle care for the other; — be this a sick person, a hungry child, or the sick and dying earth (cf. Furlong, p. 244). It is part of mission spirituality to foster in all the ability to, wonder like children, to be touched in depth, to see the mystery of nature, of simple realities like flowers, birds, human faces or love (cf. Wijngaard John, *Inheriting the Master's Cloak. Creative Biblical Spirituality*, Bangalore, 1986, p. 134). A richly suggestive line from Tagore may sum up the ecospirituality we are hinting at here: "Silence, my soul; these trees are prayers".

16. *Mission is the Sphere of the Spirit.*

a) Mission is the extension in space and time of the Incarnation of God's Word. It is, like the incarnation, the work of the Spirit (Lk 1:15, 35, 41, 67, 80; 2:25-27; Acts 1:2, 5, 8; 2:1-4, 14-24, 38). Those who engage in it are co-workers of the Spirit. This they can be only to the extent they live in the Spirit, are open and responsive to the Spirit's presence and freedom and creations in the heart of people, of the earth and of human history. The Holy Spirit is the principal Agent of Mission (cf. Acts 13:1-3; *Redemptoris Missio*, John Paul II, 1991, nn. 21, 30; *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Paul VI, 1974, n. 75). That is why She is present at the public commissioning of Jesus on the Jordan (Lk 3:21-22; Jn 1:32-34). She takes charge of the life of Jesus, leading him to the desert and back to Galilee (Lk 4:1, 14). Jesus, as he begins his ministry is aware of the Spirit's anointing of him, which was empowering and urging him to dedicate himself to a liberative mission (Lk 4:18-19). Amid the trials of his ministry, it is in the Spirit, whom the Father gave him without reserve, that Jesus finds comfort; it is in the Spirit that he thrills for joy (Lk 10:21; Jn 3:34). All the apostles and disciples are anointed and enabled by the Spirit- Breath of Jesus

(Jn 20:21-22), and baptised with the fire that Jesus came to cast on the earth (Lk 3:16; 12:49-50; Acts 2:3). The Spirit and the missionary are team-mates; they share the work of witnessing (Jn 15:26-27; Acts 1:8). Hence the necessity on the part of the missionary to be aware of and united with the Spirit and to appropriate Her perspective (cf. Kroeger, 1994, p. 35).

b) The Spirit's activity overflows the bounds of the Christian community. The Spirit fills the whole earth and all history. She is new-creatively present in the lives of followers of other faiths as well as in secular movements and struggles for justice, freedom and unity, and for the creation of the beautiful, whether physical or social (cf. *Gaudium et Spes* nn. 22, 26; *Redemptoris Missio*, nn. 28-32; *Dominum et Vivificantem*, John Paul II, 1986, nn. 53-54). Not only the Church but humankind is endowed with a variety of Spirit-gifts (1 Cor 12:4-11). Both the Church and the human community are charismatic in structure. It is essential to mission spirituality to discern, respect, foster, and evoke these gifts and treasures since they are given to enable people to meet the demands of God's Reign in an unfolding history, and to handle experiences of sorrow and joy and disappointment and death in ways that can serve life and hope (cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, nn. 61-76; cf. Kroeger, 1994, pp. 48, 52).

c) It is in the context of this universal action of the Spirit operative in the world, affecting individuals, society, history, peoples, cultures and religions, that "inter-religious dialogue becomes an important key to discover the Spirit's befriending presence", and to collaborate with Her in the project of transforming the world (*Dialogue and Proclamation*, Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, 1991, nn. 21, 26, 35 etc.). As Joseph Comblin points out, the Spirit is known in the concrete activity of building a new world. That defines spirituality of mission for all contexts. The Spirit does not turn us on ourselves, does not direct us inwards. "The experience of the Spirit launches men and women out into the world ... to tackle superhuman tasks". "The Spirit does not set us apart from the world and its demands". The Spirit makes people "more dynamic and more involved in active love for their neighbour. And ... it is this concern that, according to the Bible, has to be taken as the sign of authenticity" (Comblin, Joseph *Holy Spirit and Liberation*, New York, Orbis Books, pp. 4-8).

d) The Spirit does not separate, divide or compartmentalise. She permeates all aspects of life and all spheres of reality, and brings about wholeness and harmony though often dialectically through

conflict and pain, through the dynamics of the Cross. She unites God and creation and leads us to experience God in creation and creation in God. We experience God as "acting on us and on the world at the same time, relating us to the world and the world to us, not in some vague cosmic contact, but in a specific and limited course of action". There is no gap between experience of acting and experience of the Spirit, nor between action and prayer, nor between practice and celebration of the practice, nor between individual person and community (cf. Comblin p. 31). This integration marks the missionary's life in the Spirit.

e) In Asian experience the Spirit is more important than the texts created by Spirit-inspired people. The Spirit inspires not only "religious" texts but also secular ones like poems, plays, laws, philosophies and all searching questions about meaning, values, relationships and ultimate concerns. The Spirit criticises all texts and our interpretations of them. She challenges our creations, subverts our establishments and calls us to fresh insights and new dreams and unsuspected depths and surprising praxis.

f) Asian spirituality rejoices in the guidance of the Spirit who "leads us to the complete truth". It rejoices in the Anointing which we receive from the Lord and which teaches us everything inwardly and effectively (Jn 16:13; 1 Jn 2:27). Everyone who loves brothers and sisters knows God for God is love; and no one who fails to love has any knowledge of God. That defines both the content of mission and the pulse of mission spirituality. The loving heart bears witness to the truth, to the reality of God, and to the shape God wants the world to have. The knowledge of Yahweh and *hesed* go together (Hos 2:21-22). Since the law of the Spirit is planted within us and the new covenant is written on our hearts, we shall be God's own, and "there will be no further need for anyone to teach neighbour". No, we shall all know God from the least to the greatest, and bear witness to one another and celebrate together (cf. Jn 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:13; 1 Jn 2:27; Jer 31:31-34; Mt 23:8).

g) Kroeger cites Patriarch Athenagoras as "giving expression to the special role of the Holy Spirit in salvation and mission in most felicitous terms";

"Without the Holy Spirit —
God is far away,
Christ stays in the past,

the Gospel is a dead letter,
 the Church is simply an Organisation,
 authority, a matter of domination,
 mission, a matter of propaganda,
 the liturgy no more than an evocation,
 Christian living a slave morality.

But in the Holy Spirit —

the cosmos is resurrected
 and groans with the birthpangs of the kingdom,
 the risen Christ is there,
 the Gospel is the power of life,
 the Church shows forth the life of the Trinity,
 authority is a liberating service,
 mission is a Pentecost,
 the liturgy is both memorial and anticipation,
 human action is deified” (Kroeger, James H., *Signposts of the Spirit for Mission* (no date), p. 18).

17. Spirituality then is a large and complex reality which includes all the modes and modalities of living the life of the Kingdom restored through Jesus Christ. It includes an inner dynamism which impels that life, and the values which orient it, and the lifestyle in which the values are concretely expressed. This global configuration has been traditionally called the following of Jesus (Driver, Juan, in *Encuentros y Dialogo*, No. 7, 1989, p. 14).

“Mission spirituality” concludes Kroeger, “is, at its foundations a Spirit-inspired Trinitarian experience. Reflection and prayer allow the Spirit to transform and anoint one for mission and for experiencing a sending forth by the Spirit’s power. The Spirit-filled person becomes absorbed in the loving plan of salvation (*mysterion*) that God has for all people” (cf. Kroeger, *Signposts*, p. 15). It is a spirituality rooted in the experience of the God of grace and of the grace that is Asia. It is expressed in the following of Jesus on the Asian road, and lived in the power of the Holy Spirit who has for centuries been active in Asia’s history. It draws nourishment from the community of Christ which includes the peoples of Asia. It becomes embodied in all quests for fuller humanity and finer fellowship.

A Spirituality of mission is the appropriate response we give to the facts of the Gospel and to the facts of Asia, made possible by the Holy Spirit. It is life rendered by the Holy Spirit into an Asian pilgrimage.

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DM = *Dialogue and Mission*. Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, 1984.

LOCAL CULTURES

INSTRUMENTS OF INCARNATED CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

Samuel Rayan, SJ

“Spirituality builds on, engages and is engaged by, one’s cultural roots” writes Joan Puls in her 1985 book, *A Spirituality for Our Times*.

This is going to be a meditation on culture and on its relation to spirituality.

A. Culture

1. Culture as used here is a metaphor deriving from cultivating the soil. Actively it refers to the process of developing an existing potential; passively it denotes the resultant product, state or condition. This second objective meaning is the more modern. Culture is what we humans grow or create. It is the result of human intervention, and is distinguished from nature which is given, and grows and develops independently of our minds, wills and hands. Thus a cave in a mountain is nature, while this room, this cave in which we are assembled, is culture. Hair on the head is nature, but each particular hairdo is culture. The skin is nature, the shirt is culture. In a profounder view, one might say that nature, creation, is God’s culture — result of an intervention of the divine mind and will (Song, Choan-Seng, *Christian Mission in Reconstruction. An Asian Analysis*. New York: Orbis Books, 1977, 25:29-30). A cultivated thing or environment would be objective culture but that presupposes a cultivated mind or person, a subjective culture. Cultivated fields point to peasants of remarkable culture, even if these are illiterate.

2. Until recently culture used to be identified with and defined in terms of the fine arts: painting, music, dance, poetry, drama, etc., and the ability to produce them or to appreciate them. This bourgeois approach viewed culture as an *élite* privilege, a leisure-time activity, separate from the labour which sustains life. To the bourgeoisie culture was entertainment and fashionable commodity. Karl Marx criticised this view and use of culture as dehumanised and fetishist. He sought to restore the ancient holistic tradition by re-integrating culture into the totality of human activity. His analysis

disclosed a web of interdependence between production relations and the other social and cultural expressions. The impact is mutual. Culture does not begin after the serious business of economics has been taken care of. The two proceed together, causing each other. Socio-economic activity is an integral part of the cultural process. The potter of old not only made a useful vessel which could hold water, but took care to make it shapely and beautiful and to adorn it further with designs of bird and flower. Unalienated authentic human labour which is useful and beautiful, is at once economics and aesthetics, work and joy.

In the same bourgeois vein, conquerors and colonisers used to identify culture with their own way of eating, dressing, behaving or misbehaving. The conquered “native” had, of course, no culture. His art was not considered art because it was different from the colonialist’s. But culture is more than art, and is not necessarily identical with the ways of victors. There is then a second meaning of culture. Culture is the total, complex, expression of the spirit of a people. It is a community’s way and view of life. The way of life includes the group’s relation to nature, the way they work and earn their living, the mode and organisation of production, the mobilisation of the community, their laws, traditions, festivals, language, arts, artefacts, tools, ornaments. Beneath all these there is a self-understanding of the group, an interpretation of life, a world view and certain values and priorities. These get expressed in popular sayings, stories, myths, and celebrations, in interpretations of birth, death, suffering, etc. Culture is then the historically developed expression of insights, values and needs which characterises the life of a community. It refers to “the organising principle of a way of life or to a set of traditions of living” (Nandy, Ashis, ‘Cultural Forms for Social Transformation: A Credo’, in *Alternatives XII* 1987). Thus seen there is no human group without a culture of its own. Education is the process of critical/innovative transmission and reception of culture.

3. In culture there is a spiritual element. Every culture embraces a multitude of values: material and

utilitarian values, (like housing, clothing, food, health): intellectual and artistic ones (poetry, painting, philosophy): moral values (respect for life, love of truth, sense of freedom, concern for justice): and religious values (faith in the Absolute, relation to the Holy, its expressions in rites, liturgies, icons, temples): and finally the various skills and refinements of mind, heart and hands connected with each and all of the above. Cultures entail spirituality also in the sense that they are people's responses to the reality of human needs, possibilities, historical situations and events as well as to their implications and promises. As these evolve and unfold, new openness and responses are called for from the human side. And that means spirituality too keeps growing and putting forth new buds and blossoms.

4. Cultures are classified on various grounds. On the basis of geography culture is Eastern or Western, continental, regional or local; or also national or ethnic. On the basis of religion one may speak of Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic or Christian culture. On the basis of social domination and dependence, anthropologists are wont to distinguish between the great traditions in culture and the little ones. Culture could be urban or rural; commercial, industrial or agrarian. On grounds of social organisation there could be a capitalist culture or a socialist one; a culture of class divisions or of equality. There could be a culture of hate as distinct from a culture of love; a culture of oppression and one of resistance, a culture of the victors and a different one of their victims.

5. In that classification a third meaning of culture is suggested. Culture as social dream and political resistance. In creating culture we are expressing what we are and what we want to become. The aspirations, dreams and hopes which we cherish and nurse, and the mobilisation of energies, efforts and people in order to realise our dreams imply espousing the values and praxis of openness and 'response-ability'. And that tallies with our understanding of spirituality. Every effort expended to make life and society freer and gentler, more beautiful and human, more equal, co-operative and sharing is a culture-creating step. Every such process coincides with the spiritual-becoming process. The spiritual-becoming process is

Culture does not begin after the serious business of economics has been taken care of. The two proceed together, causing each other. Socio-economic activity is an integral part of the cultural process. The potter of old not only made a useful vessel which could hold water, but took care to make it shapely and beautiful and to adorn it further with designs of bird and flower.

interior to culture-creating activity. In both there is always an intuition and pursuit of the "more" — the "more" of the Human and the Divine. We have rejected the view of culture as one more consumer commodity and status symbol for the upper layers of industrial society. We are now going beyond the concept of culture as a way of life. In a situation of social fragmentation through hierarchic classes and racism and sexism and imposed poverty and skewed development and arms accumulation and wars and the threat of wars by "the big league of human violence and greed" (Nandy, Ashis, 'Culture, Voice and Development. A Primer for the Unsuspecting', 1992, p. 7), it is "necessary to move into the struggle for personal and social transformation. Culture (then) is seen above all as a commitment to the construction of a more just and caring society for all ... particularly the underprivileged" — a society "without oppressed classes", without soulless consumerism and vulgar affluence side by side with widespread destitution and misery. (Candau, Vera Maria in *Ideas and Action*, 152/83, Nos. 3 and 4, pp. 7-9; cf. Lk 16:19-31; 19:1-10; Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37). Here we have the dynamic aspect of culture, and its spiritual dimension.

Here culture becomes, in Ashis Nandy's words, "a form of political resistance, and the 'language' in which such resistance is articulated". A galaxy of political thinkers and activists, like Gandhi, Amilcar Cabral, Chinua Achebe, Masanobu Fukuoka, "have given shape to this meaning of culture". The affirmation of Indian culture under colonial domination was also a protest against political domination, a challenge to its legitimacy, and a defiance of its language. Recall for instance the Santal rebellion in the 19th century, Gandhi's *satyagraha* in the 20th, the anti-colonial struggles of the Pathans, the ongoing Chipko, Dalit and Feminist movements in our days (Nandy, 1992, p. 5).

6. Culture in its third meaning is resistance to oppression. But "no theory of oppression can make sense unless it is cast in native (local) terms or categories, that is, in terms and categories used by the victims of our times". The victims see that "concepts such as development, growth, history, science and

technology” have become new ‘reasons of the State’ and “mystification’s for new forms of violence and injustice”. Hence it is that “resistance to modern oppression has to involve ... some resistance to modernity”, represented by the concepts just listed. (Nandy, 1987, pp. 113-123). The victims are also sceptical and wary of the modern nation-State, of modern science and technology and of the large forces of history. Ashis Nandy calls attention to the fact that “in most Asian and African societies, the State has ... become ... the major instrument of corruption and violence towards their own people”. Modern science has become “the basic model of domination ... and the ultimate justification for all institutionalised violence”. Talk of history’s large forces can be “a substitute for the political morality of everyday life”, for personal responsibility and internal consistency. Attention has been drawn to the fact that “the Third World societies usually maintain within their borders exactly the same violent, exploitative, ethnocidal systems which they confront in the larger world: the same centre and periphery, the same myth that the sacrifices made by the people in the short run will lead to the beatitude of development and scientific advancement in the long run, the same story of over-consuming *élites* fattening themselves to early death at the centre, and starvation, victimhood and slow death at periphery” (Nandy, 1987, pp. 121-122).

B. Incarnated Spirituality

7. The Theological Commission of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC), meeting in Thailand, April 1996, saw Asia as a sea of suffering due to poverty created mainly by colonialism and globalisation, and by the systematic exclusion and extinction of indigenous groups, and by the marginalisation of people’s language and culture: as well as by certain processes of modernisation and loss of precious heritage. They also took note of liberation movements and people’s struggles. And struggle is the stuff of life. Jesus’ was a life of struggle and combat due to an uncompromising stand he took for the poor and for freedom for all. The permanent need of the poor and the oppressed is to struggle and “to have the power to resist the oppressive and exploitive structures of society”. Conversion and repentance consist not only in turning away from sin, but in resisting the forces that violate the image of God and counter the cause of the Kingdom on earth. In the face of the atheism that injustice is, integral evangelism “should emphasise not so much individual repentance as people’s resistance against demonic forces” (Milanio

Aoanan). Faced with the diabolical forces of militarism and oppression, the nature and process of spirituality would consist in awakening, conscientising, mobilising, resisting, and envisaging alternatives and going ahead to create them, and marching forward to celebrate freedom.

Openness to the spirit in fidelity to the presence of all our ancestors accompanying us in love, faith and power; we have come to appreciate and accept our RESPONSE - ABILITY in creating a renewed humanity, the reign of our God in history. Towards a cosmic vision.

This commitment urges us into relationships of integrity, wholeness and harmony on the personal, and social level.

We want to name this our moment in history and to accept the call from our God to be a Real Presence of the Reign of God in our time.

8. In India’s national movement, Gandhi combined non-co-operation campaigns against the British with a network of constructive activities in which every one was to engage. These symbolic actions were meant as a cultural renaissance, political awakening, and development of self-confidence and courage. Gandhi tried to “draw upon the creative and innovative springs of local action at the grassroots” (Kothari, Rajni, ‘Voluntarism and Political Action’, in *The Indian Express*, 20 June 1989). In Gandhi, as also in Martin Luther King, political action and profound spirituality were combined. Highly motivated people in touch with these springs constituted the real movement for equity, justice and human rights — that is, for authentic spirituality.

Throughout Asia, over the long centuries, the rich and the poor have been in conflict “with intermittent periods of exhaustion and disengagement.... For the peasant, struggle has been a way of life, not an impulsive departure... For the Asian peasant ... rebellion was a common occurrence. The aftermath of uprisings, however, was often so devastating ... that the modern-day heirs of the tradition of revolt would not lightly feel moved to raise their battle flag again.... Yet for some the haunting memories of past failures had faded with a hero, a sect, an incident, rebellion’s time had come again” (Lewis, John Wilson and Hartford, Kathleen J., eds., *Peasant Rebellion and Communist Revolution in Asia*, Stanford, 1974, p. 3).

The Seminar has heightened our awareness of all that binds us.

It has also affirmed our evolving understanding of the LIBERATING action of the Holy Spirit who is the principle agent of mission. We express our convictions in the form of beatitudes ...

Blessed are we when we reverence and respect all cultures, when we remain open to and accepting of differences;

Blessed are we when we acknowledge and appreciate the sacred space of the other and the complementarity of religions and cultures.

Blessed are we when we develop our capacity to NAME, DENOUNCE AND RESIST

the idols of the global market economy and consumer society that hold people enslaved and when we embrace discipleship as a focused option for the poor.

Christine White tells of how “the first French troops in Cochinchina in 1861 were amazed at the extent of peasant resistance.... The resistance centre was everywhere. The resistance grew as peasants came to feel the growing burden of taxes, forced labour, having to meet the high salary of French administrators ... leading to the formation in 1930 of peasant soviets (White, Christine P., ‘The Vietnamese Revolutionary Alliance: Intellectuals, Workers and Peasants’, in Lewis and Hartford, eds., *Peasant Rebellion and Communist Revolution in Asia*, 1974, p. 91).

John W. Lewis and Kathleen J. Hartford aptly observe that the spirituality of Asian peasants is to be deduced from their rebellion since it is not easy to find out their beliefs and attitudes (cf. Lewis and Hartford, p. 2).

In the Philippines the suffering of many years, the criticism and the protest, the price paid in lives, the determination to fight for change, the action, the clear religious inspiration and expression, the inseparability of prayer from struggle for liberation, of spirituality from politics, the will and the faith of the people against the tanks — all came to a head on 26 February, 1986. It was the work of the people, a liturgy, in which many priests were willing to go underground for a revolution to secure the rights of the oppressed masses, and end the domination and manipulation by the resident U.S. army, and Markos, their tool.

Similar stories of revolutionary Christianity could be told from China, Korea, Sri Lanka. Sevaka Johan Devananda of Sri Lanka, speaking from experience, describes the prison as a fine place of spiritual formation! Going back and forth, to and from prison is a beautiful hermeneutical circle of liberation spirituality.

9. Along with resistance and struggle there is much suffering in the world. People have their own ways of coping with suffering, their own culture of the cross. The passion of humankind is the passion

of Christ who is solidary with the hungry and the homeless, and weeps with those that weep. There is God hidden in human suffering, and our suffering is hidden in the wounds of Christ. As the Council has confessed, God has ways unknown to us to enable every woman and man to participate in the Paschal mystery. Kroeger says it well when he affirms that “life itself has a paschal configuration. All peoples struggle to move from darkness to light, from alienation to union. Life has an internal dynamic, focused on the movement from death to life in all its dimensions: from falsehood to truth, from apathy to responsibility, from marginalisation to participation, from loneliness and isolation to universal communion, from sin to grace... . The paschal nature of all life and experience ... provides openings for a deep human-divine encounter. It allows the human-divine experience of one (Christian, Buddhist) to encounter the human-divine experience of another (Muslim, Hindu) It is in situations of apparent God for -sakeness that the Christian Paschal Mystery is intimately and validly linked with the paschal mystery of all humanity... . The paschal paradigm has the power to illumine the suffering that is omnipresent in creation and history as well as the truth of God in relation to suffering (Kroeger 1994, pp. 57-58).

10. The truth of God in relation to suffering? That truth seems to be God’s silence. And yet God is not silent. He bids us loud and clear to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and take care of the widow and the orphan. Still there is no life that does not run into the hour which makes us cry out, “Why, my God, have you forsaken me? (cf. Mk 15:34). Why do you not speak even if it be in anger?” For some all critical thought and inquiry starts from the Word of God. In Asia we start from what is prior to the Word’, the Womb that bears the Word, namely, the Silence of God. When the Christian reads, ‘In the beginning was the Word’, the Buddhist asks, ‘So you have never been silent? From the very beginning you have been verbose and noisy?’ The Buddhist culture, pervasive all over South and East Asia, is inviting us to begin in silence, and through a minimum of necessary words to pilgrimage to deeper silence towards the unspeakable Mystery which can only be suggested by means of symbols: and of symbols, the best, the richest, the most expressive is Silence. The silence of the Buddha tells us that God is silence. “Not that God’s being is silence”, clarifies Panikkar, but that “God’s silence is precisely a silence of being. Perhaps we should say simply that silence is the locus of God, ... the Psalmist’s “abyss of the abyss” (Ps 72:8), the midnight silence that is beyond

being, the silence that reigns in the void that neither is nor is *not* (*The Rig Veda* x. 129.1), the silence from which reality draws its origin” (Panikkar, Raimundo, *The Silence of God. The Answer of the Buddha*. New York: Orbis Books, 1989. Spanish, 1970, p. 171). In the last analysis the silence of the Buddha means that God cannot be the object of speech or thought. To make God an object is to reduce God to creaturehood.

11. That leaves us with the importance of symbols and non-verbal expressions of the common people: the picture, the dance, the pantomime, music, icons, plays, liturgy. Also the social organisation and social behaviour of indigenous people are symbols, a kind of liturgy, pointing in the direction of the Divine, and enabling us to open up to the healing and liberating touch of the Spirit. Enter then in silence into the spirituality of Borobudur, Ajanta, Ellora, Sigiria, and of the unsophisticated drawings and designs of local people. The drawings, dance and drama of the Minjung of Korea are shot through with *Han* (pain,

Blessed are we when we recognise the harmony, unity and interconnectedness of all life which calls us to work in a wholistic way for transformation and healing in Church and in society.

Blessed are we when we allow ourselves to be made uncomfortable by the questions that disturb us:

How do we take a stand for global justice?

What are we really doing to address the issue of inculturation?

How prepared are we to let go of structures, styles of prayer and liturgical

celebration that are no longer liberating?

and Blessed are we when we exercise our RESPONSE-ABILITY to collaborate with the Spirit.

Blessed are we when we approach mission with humility, when we remain open and responsive to God's presence in ALL of reality.

anger and frustration and yearning for freedom) and packed with protest against and criticism of feudal and colonial oppression, and pregnant with dreams of a different order of things, a different understanding and interpretation of life and people from that of the *élite*, and hence a different experience of faith, a different spirituality. There is also the original symbol system of the universe, this culture of God, the source of inexhaustible inspiration and the basis of endless contemplation.

12. Silence is related not only to the unspeakable reality of God, but to the inexplicable reality of the universe as well. In the view of Asian and ancient peoples "everything in the universe is connected to everything else". The universe is "a dynamic web of inter-related events". Writes Fritjof Capra: "The cosmic interpenetrating of things and events is illustrated in the *Avatamsaka Sutra* by the metaphor of Indra's net of precious gems... . In the heaven of Indra there is said to be a network of pearls so arranged that if you look at one you see all the others reflected in it. In the same way each object in the world is not only itself but involves every other object and in fact is everything else". In every particle of dust "there are present Buddhas without number" (Capra, Fritjof, *The Tao of Physics*. New York: Bantam Books 1983-84, pp. 276, 280-81, 287). This perspective is shared by all mystical thought. Recall William Blake's famous lines:

"To see a world in a grain of sand,
and a heaven in a wild flower,
To hold infinity in the palm of your hand,

and eternity in an hour".

In his 'Monadology' philosopher Leibnitz wrote: "Each portion of matter may be conceived of as a garden full of plants, and as a pool full of fishes. But each branch of the plant, each member of the animal, each drop of its humours is also such a garden or such a pond" (Capra, pp. 287-289). Here is a culture involving a spirituality which rejects individualism and greed, patent laws and market principles; and affirms the social character of wealth and of all human achievement.

Inter-relatedness also means that no phenomenon can be adequately expressed, explained or named. "The sages are not interested in explaining things, but in obtaining a direct non-intellectual experience of the unity of all things". They do not elaborate scientific theories, but shape a "vision of nature transcending the realm of thought and language and leading... into the world of *acintya*, the unthinkable. The knowledge contained in such a vision cannot be communicated in words. It will be the knowledge which Lao Tzu had in mind, more than two thousand years ago, when he said: "He who knows does not speak,

He who speaks does not know" (Capra, p. 292).

13. I would like to conclude by recalling a few suggestive symbols from Asia.

a) The classical Japanese flower arrangement exhibits three layers. The flower or bunch of flowers or of leaves that stands out topping the whole is said to represent the realm of the Spirit, which is the realm of transcendent Beauty. The lowest layer closest to the vase or earth stands for the earth with its beauty fragmented and threatened, beauty on a pilgrimage, dreaming of its roots and its home in the Transcendent. The middle layer is the human, bridging the other two, open to the beauty above, receiving its overflow and communicating it to the earth below to heal its brokenness and make its beauty whole. The vocation of the human layer, the call that comes to it from above and from below, is to be on a mission of creating beauty, to receive it from above and embody it in physical and social realities on earth.

b) The Chinese Yin and Yang gives us a spiritual lesson in interdependence and co-operation. All reality is made of a pair of opposites which are always in motion, each having something of the other right at its centre. Joy and sorrow, success and failure, life and death, light and darkness, the

feminine and the masculine, certitude and doubt, art and science — Yin and Yang expand and contract in turn in order to realise the possibilities of both and the roundness of the whole.

c) The colossal images of the Buddha, seated or reclining, which one finds all over East Asia, overwhelm one with the sense of a great Presence which people honour with lotus flowers, joss sticks and rice offerings. The presence reassures us that our wild desires which make sport of us, can be tamed, the demon of Mammon, even when organised into principalities and powers of the capitalist market, can be overthrown, and the human liberated into the fullness of peace. The path of liberation leads through *karuna*, measureless, universal compassion. Perhaps it is this message that reincarnates in the statues of the Goddess of Mercy standing on many a cliff and rock overlooking the turbulent sea all over East Asia.

d) It has been said, Asia is rice and religion. Rice may be scarce, but religion is plentiful. The spiritual endeavour of Asia is to hold the two together in harmony and balance and not let the one overwhelm and edge the other out. Religion cries out for rice: Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, give us today our daily rice. Kim Chi Ha, the Korean Christian poet and political activist, sings of the religious depths of rice. Rice is heaven. As heaven is for all and the stars are not privatised, so rice must be shared. Yes, rice is heaven. Rice must be eaten together. The song reflects the basic concern of the masses of the people everywhere: the concern both for food and for fellowship — an egalitarian economy which alone can correspond to the presuppositions of religion. That chimes in with the view of India's sages: he that cooks for himself alone, eats sin.

e) Here is a line from Tagore. An invitation to eco-spirituality. "Silence, my soul: These trees are prayers". Do not disturb, but join in. These trees are prayers. The earth is praying. Let the line keep chanting and echoing in the silence of our souls.

f) Finally two love-stories. Shiva was a Yogi, a rigorous ascetic, seated in meditation in the solitary recesses of the higher ranges of the Himalaya mountains. Parvati, the beautiful daughter of the Himalayas serves the Yogi Guest, cares for his needs, and eventually falls in love with him. Sensing the situation, the ascetic flees the scene, leaving Parvati tearful, and her father perplexed. Parvati takes to severe tapas, asceticism, one better than

Shiva. Her purpose: to win the heart of Shiva. Months later a forest dweller, an ascetic, visits her, tries to dissuade her from the course she was pursuing, and ridicules Shiva in her hearing. Parvati was indignant. When the visitor thought his mockery had only redoubled the woman's love for the heartless Yogi, he put off his disguise: it was Shiva. He was now at her feet, and conceded that her love had qualified her to become literally half of Shiva's body. The pair is shown as having a shared Hermaphrodite body, *ardhanariswara*. Shiva is the divine reality, Parvati, the human, the cosmic, now becomes Shiva's creative *Shakti*, power. 'The two are one. Love is invincible. It unites and makes reality whole. Love is spirituality. Shiva and Parvati both exemplify the openness and 'response-ability' which we hold as defining spirituality.

g) The second love story is about Savitri who married Satyavan, a woodcutter. On the day of their wedding a sage told Savitri a secret meant only for her ears. Her husband was destined to die on the first anniversary of their wedding; Savitri kept her secret, loved her man, and prayed and fasted more and more and ever more fervently as the fatal day came nearer. Finally the day arrived. Satyavan took his axe and was leaving for the forest as usual. Most unusual, Savitri insisted on accompanying him. At noon they ate together. Satyavan then lay down to rest a little and fell asleep. It was then that Yama, the god of death, came by riding his buffalo, and declared he had come to take Satyavan away. The woman's pleading went for nothing. Yama had his orders, and the man's time was up. Yama turned to go, and Satyavan stopped breathing, his body began to grow cold. Weeping, Savitri followed Yama, and refused to turn back. Would she return if he granted her three boons? Yes, she would. Name them. She named them. Health and happiness for Satyavan's parents and people. Granted. Health and happiness for her own parents and relatives. Granted. Health and happiness and long life for Satyavan's children born of herself. Granted. It was then that Yama realised the difficult situation into which the woman had tricked him. 'Very well', he said, 'go back, your man lives, and the blessing will come true'. Savitri returned to where her husband lay. At the sound of her steps, he opened his eyes, and looked about in wonder as if the world and the woman were freshly beautiful and dear. Love is stronger than death: even wiser. That is the culture of the people and their spirituality.

CONCLUSION

‘Nothing ever becomes real until it is experienced’, wrote John Keats.

‘If you want to make a thing real, make it local’, said G.K. Chesterton.

‘The real world is not somewhere else, but everywhere, and each of us carries it within’, writes John F. X. Harriot (*The Tablet*, 7th March 1987).

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COMING EVENTS

WORKING GROUP

Tuesday, 16 September

Pacific

16.00 hrs. at SEDOS

SEDOS Annual General Assembly

Fr Robert Schreiter, CPPS (CTU Chicago)

MISSIONARY TESTIMONY IN REALITY OF CONFLICT

—

RECONCILIATION AS A MODEL OF MISSION

MISSION 2000 — NEW CHALLENGES ARISING

Tuesday, 2 December, 9.00 - 13.00 hrs.
Brothers of the Christian Schools, Via Aurelia, 476,
(simultaneous translations)