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Editorial

The 50th anniversary of *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* was for many in the Church and society a moment to look at the present situation concerning Human Rights and their observance. We begin this issue with a contribution on Human Rights from Asia. Fr FELIX WILFRED, a well known theologian from India, points out that at present human rights are not only under pressure from many types of physical violence, but also from violent forms of the free market. He thinks that only civil society will be able to enforce human rights and control any subtle disrespect of the same. —

Dr XAVIER KOCHUPARAMPIL helps us to understand the increasing religious intolerance in Indian society especially during the passed year. He sees some new currents in Indian society which he believes are not typical of Indian traditional tolerance and can represent a growing danger for religious minorities. —

In his address to the Plenary Assembly of the Italian Bishops' Conference, Cardinal CARLO MARIA MARTINI dwells on the richness of the Word of God for any pastoral work of the Church today. There are "several roads to Emmaus", representing many life situations, but all are able to promote encounters with the Lord. —

In our second French article, ORLANDO FALS BORDA, a Colombian professor of Political Studies, calls our attention to certain dangers of aggressive mondialization. He calls for "spaces of humanization", especially in order to save the cultural and social values of the South which are menaced. —

The Information Superhighway on the Internet does not remain outside the Church and HER mission to communicate the Gospel. Fr GEORGE PLATHOTTAM, SDB, of the Indian Press Association, evaluates the potential of this very effective new media, but he also invites the Church to be attentive so that new and powerful technologies do not become new forms of Colonialism. —

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Dr Felix Wilfred

Human Rights or the Rights of the Poor? Redeeming the Human Rights from Contemporary Inversions

(This is a revised version of a paper presented at the Seventh International Conference of North-South Philosophical Dialogue, held at the Central American University, San Salvador, El Salvador, 27-30 July 1998. Professor in the School of Philosophy and Religious Studies of the University of Madras, the author reflects on the ambiguity of human rights in recent history. The forces of the market economy have tended to appropriate the discourse on human rights and sought alliance with the State to maximise profits. But the market and human rights are really incompatible. There is need to reaffirm the "sovereignty of the victims" and take measures to restore human rights to the poor).

Like many things in real life and history, human rights are characterised by a radical ambiguity. We would naturally expect that they further the cause of the poor. But in reality, they are being turned into means to protect mostly the powerful, and least those in need — the poor and the marginalized victims.

This is a curious story of inversion. Examples are legion which show how factors such as selfishness and institutionalization can twist and invert ideals and principles in such a way that they end up supporting the very things against which they originally stood.

Fifty years after the United Nations declared the universal human rights, the world stands in need of testing this legal instrument to find out what it really has become — one more addition to the armoury of the powerful, or a “weapon of the weak”? The future of human rights lies on whether even now we can redeem them to be the rights of the marginalized. It is only by bringing the shelterless poor under the protection of these rights that human rights will acquire their true *universal* character.

Not only are human rights inverted, but the *discourse* on them is being *appropriated* by the globalizing forces. These have taken upon themselves the task of defining the meaning and scope of human rights and laying down the parameters of their operation.

Curiously enough, the very forces which are the most blatant violators of the rights of the poor pose themselves as their guardians and protectors. I am reminded of a Tamil proverb: ‘The wolf is shedding tears because the lamb is getting wet in the rain’! The challenge before us is to ensure that these rights become in effect the rights of the poor and that the dis-

course on human rights is restored to them.

Part I

The Making of a Hybrid Framework

The immediate circumstance that led to the formulation of human rights in its contemporary form was the experience of Second World War. In particular, the horrendous experience of Nazi concentration camps, barbaric genocide, gas-chambers (euphemistically called “shower baths”!), the brutal use of human beings for medical experiments, the practice of eugenics, etc., shook the conscience of civilized humanity.¹ Such experiences exposed the kind of irrationality and anti-humanism that can be engendered, ironically, under the pretext of creating an order of perfect nationality.² If the concrete experience of the war lent urgency to the need for a set of universal human rights, the inspiration behind them derived from two sources. In the main, the modern proclamation of human rights was nourished by the liberal tradition, which, as the history of its genesis shows, was centred on the claims for civil and political rights. An important corrective to the one-sidedness of this tradition was the introduction by the United Nations of cultural and economic rights into the purview of human rights.³ This latter tradition brought with it the experience of the many struggles and battles fought by the socialists right from the middle of the 19th century. In short, we have a certain *hybridity* in the articulation of human rights with two traditions not fully integrated. The tensions experienced between these two traditions in the context of the Cold War made plain

how shaky the framework is.

The Shifting Scenario

Whether in the liberal or in the socialist tradition, human rights have political power as their main point of reference. In fact, the liberal tradition is associated with the struggle to check and control the absolute sovereignty claimed by rulers — first the monarchs and later by the sovereign States.⁴ Individual human beings are endowed with inalienable rights, which the State cannot prevail against, but should submit itself to. Similarly, in the socialist tradition, the responsibility is vested in the State for providing the most basic amenities for a dignified human life, and to recognize the cultural rights of various peoples.

The focus of human rights is today changing. This is because the State is no more the sole public offender of human rights, nor the only agency that could be held responsible for the security of the citizens. Transnational capitalism with its global market and trade pervades every sector of human living. It has become an insidious violator of human rights. In the face of its prowess the nation-States have become like mute and powerless sheep. Now, the present human rights framework is attuned to combat violations by the State. Strategies and mechanisms have been created mainly to monitor the State's functioning in respect to human rights. The fact is that the dominant developmental model and the new transnational economic system have caused an unprecedented serious crisis in human rights. They violate the basic rights of the poor such as the right to food, basic medical care, primary education, etc.⁵ Unfortunately we do not have any adequate means to hold under check and control this new leviathan — economic absolutism. As the present set of human rights came to existence by combating State absolutism, so the poor require today new ways and means to combat and protect themselves from this new economic absolutism which demands a lot of human sacrifices.

The change is characterized also by the entry of *new interlocutors* in the arena of human rights. Gender has become an important human rights issue;⁶ so too ethnic, linguistic and cultural minorities and indigenous peoples have brought in new aspects and dimensions which simply could not be deduced from a general set of human rights valid for all.⁷ We cannot ignore the fact that in most parts of the world today, these are the burning issues of human rights. The Cold War accusations and polemics on human rights have given place to a politics of human rights between the North and the South.⁸

As a result of all these developments, there is a shift of focus also on the theoretical *discourse* of hu-

man rights. The attention is being directed to new areas of discussion from the debates which once centred on such issues as the *universality* of human rights, their foundation, to the interconnection between civil and political rights on the one hand and economic, social and cultural rights on the other. We are assisting today at a process of heavy ideology-building: I mean the States and the economic forces are engaged in theory building to justify the violation of human rights. From these ideological bastions human rights need to be freed. And this adds to the complexity of the present-day scenario of human rights and the tasks before us.

No One Can Save Human Rights and Market

That we live in an "*administered world*" (Th. Adorno) becomes clear to us when we observe the dominant economic system, symbolized by the market. The very structure and functioning of the market is inherently antithetical to human rights: both are simply incompatible. This is something that needs to be explained at some length.

First of all, the market functions with its own laws, like the mechanical Newtonian world. As in any machine, there could be *disturbances* in the functioning of the market, which then need to be removed. From the viewpoint of the neo-liberal economy and its capitalist market, the struggle for human rights and their advocacy (one could think of the workers' struggles) represent one such disturbance. It is logical that anything to do with human rights will be perceived as a challenge to the security of the system and the stability of the market. It follows then, that *no one can honestly serve market and human rights*. And if there is an appearance to the contrary, it is a clear sign of hypocrisy. This is precisely what many nations in the South point out when the nations of the North, which promote the transnational capitalist market, suddenly turn into ardent preachers of human rights. Even if one may not go about it analytically, the South perceives the contradiction between the two agenda.

The so-called structural adjustment programmes imposed on the poor nations is a way to maintain the system, but at the cost of the poor and their rights. It is well known how such programmes are oriented precisely to undercut those areas which are vital for the poor to survive and live with a minimum of human dignity.⁹ Heavy cuts on primary education and primary health care, the abolition of food-subsidies, the liquidation of the labour force — such measures are diametrically opposed to the protection of the poor. The worst affected are women.¹⁰ How, could, then market-forces and human rightsless go together?

Equality and Profitability at Loggerheads

Secondly, the life-line of the neo-liberal economy and its market is the force of competition. It is a competition in which the fittest survive and the others perish. Anything based on *equality* goes contrary to the dynamics of this economy. For, the present economy and trade function on the basis of inequality which they continue to widen. In fact, inequality is even *necessary* for the safety and profit-making by the transnational capital and trade. But the cornerstone of human rights is constituted by the principle of equality. It is easy to see why the capitalist market and the promotion of human rights to the advantage of the poor are poles apart.

We see the implications of this in terms of the rights of the poor, when the market forces penetrate societies like those of South Asia where the hierarchical order of caste is the organizing principle. Here an economic system fundamentally built on inequality meets a society in which not equality but hierarchy or subordination and superordination is the natural order.¹¹ The union of these two brands of inequality gives, birth to some of the world violations of human rights.

There is further the issue of profitability which the market incessantly seeks. Human rights become truly the rights of the poor when their basic necessities of life are defended and promoted. The calculation of profit by itself will never permit any commitment to human rights. For example, one may spend millions of dollars on research on a pill like *viagra* to enhance sexual potency — an investment that carries with it prospects of huge profits. At the same time, there is least interest in research on many tropical diseases which kill so many millions of people in the countries of the South, and deprive them of their basic right to life. The simple reason is that there is no profitability assured in this latter enterprise. Whether millions are forced to part with their lives is no concern of the capitalist market; it is what it is because it carefully avoids areas where profit is at risk.

Eclipse of the Subject

Thirdly, in the contemporary world, the practice of human rights calls for placing the *subject* of the victims at the centre. Instead, modern economic life, with the hegemony of financial capitalism, operates through the *dissolution of the subject*.¹² The accumulation of capital has no connection with the actual production and the producer. Capital is the fruit of fiction and speculation, functioning all by itself without having to refer to the producing subjects. Understandably, then, functioning as an autonomous system by its own inner dynamism and logic, financial capital-

ism continues to produce an *exclusion* of human subjects — more and more people without basic means and without security. People are rendered *faceless*, without profile, which makes exploitation all the easier. Even those countries, which not long ago proudly called themselves the “tigers” of Asia, are humbled to the state of pussy cats. The catastrophic effect of this on the lives of the poor came out in the open through the protests of the farmers of Thailand and of the students in Indonesia in recent months. They exposed the violations of human rights done to the faceless poor by international capitalism with the collusion of their ‘patriarchal States’.¹³

Inbuilt Violence in Homogenization

Fourthly, the neo-liberal economy and market rest on a particular homogenizing model of development. This model of development, tied up today with the process of globalization, is an outrageous violator of human rights. Those in the South know by experience how in the name of development the poor are deprived even of the minimum life security they enjoyed. The story of millions of indigenous peoples and tribals displaced in the name of development eloquently testifies to the violence built into the homogenizing model of development. For example, transnational capital is calling to the tribals, to surrender their forests and other natural resources for better development, which ultimately will lead to their integration into the global market. It is a very enticing call, of course, but woe to those who are gullible and believe it. Speaking on development issues, Rajni Kothari, one of the leading political scientists of South Asia, notes how the homogenization in this process negates any other forms of human self-development by forcing everything and everyone into a single universal pattern.

The modernist perspective on universalization and homogenization is *colonizing*, necessarily rejecting all other universals and castigating them as ahistorical and anachronistic.... Every other entity or belief system is by definition illegitimate. There is only one legitimate structure of power, morality and truth. All others are invalid.¹⁴

This arrogant homogenizing project built into modern liberal economy and model of development is such that it just cannot be reconciled with a genuine concern and commitment to human rights. There is an inherent violence and aggression in this project which is bound to cause victims. And that is precisely what we are witnessing in the world today. The worst thing this model of development does is to close the path of hope for the future. It exhibits what Noam Chomsky called, the “TNA syndrome” — There is

No Alternative.

State, Market and Dissent Managing Strategies

Fifthly, the incompatibility of the market and human rights naturally has its consequences for the State. Any State that promotes a neo-liberal economy and capitalist market and at the same time wants to be protector of human rights falls into a deep contradiction. The reaction of the market and State *vis-à-vis* to human rights, reveals how they try to *cover up* this contradiction by some strategic measures. The State shows a benign face towards the mounting pressure of the people clamouring for their basic rights, but at the same time it furthers the globalizing forces.¹⁵ It hands over to these forces public properties that become private ones. The market on its part wants to appropriate the human rights discourse, so that it can steer it so as to avoid any confrontation with the mounting pressures from below. For its self-justification as promoter of development, the State requires the globalizing economic forces. On the other hand, transnational capitalism and the market seek to domesticate the State so that it is rendered incapable of intervening effectively in the violation of human rights they continue to cause. In short, by the adoption of dissent managing strategies, the State and the market continue with their contradiction to human rights.

Human Rights in Defence of the Powerful?

Finally, it is a puzzling oddity that human rights should be turned into a means at the service of the powerful instead of being a shield to protect the poor. A most clear instance is the question of *private property*. It is anomalous that we club together the basic right to food of the starving children of Sudan with the right of the Microsoft Corporation or Coca-Cola companies to own properties because they are *legal persons*. It does not take any special effort to understand that there is a large qualitative difference between the two. We may recall here that according to the latest United Nations' Development Report (UNDP), "the world's 225 richest people have a combined wealth of over \$1 trillion, which is also the total income of 47 per cent of the poor, who number 2.5 billions".¹⁶ The figures speak for themselves about ownership in our present world.

Such scandalous accumulation of wealth is made possible by the present economic system in which large corporations have become the principal owners of world property. The transfer of wealth takes place from real human persons and subjects which the poor are in flesh and blood, to non-persons such as the corpo-

rations, through juridical fiction that they are 'persons'.¹⁷ And the most ludicrous situation is created when the same protection to the little possessions of the poor is extended in an aggressive way to these giant owners in the name of human rights. For the powerful, the entire human rights instrumentality is reduced to this single right of ownership. It is the hinge on which everything else moves. Universal Human Rights offers a protecting umbrella to possess and to dispose of properties. For them, of course, this right should be *universal* so that they can own properties unhindered across national borders *anywhere*. Thus human rights have become rights of big business enterprises to control the world.

As we can see the question today is not like in the years of the Cold War, a tussle between private and State-ownership. The engagement in the critique of private property is not an ideological battle between liberalism and socialism. The question has shifted to new ground from the classical dispute between two contending ideologies. With the penetration of liberal economy and the expansion of the market, we are experiencing something that affects the lives of the millions of poor on the globe.

We become more aware of this strange inversion when we consider the *raison d'être* of this right as it developed in history. In the Western classical antiquity of Greece and Rome, possession of property was a means of ascertaining one's identity, related to a particular *locality*. Property was seen in the context of the family institution and as part of the parental duty towards the progeny. It is natural then that the possession related to one's native place or region. As Stephen G. O'Kane notes with reference to Hannah Arendt,

In the classical world 'property' meant the location of the citizen and (his, not her) family rather than specific material possessions or 'wealth'. That is, the criterion for membership of the public body included a geographical element, not necessarily specified in the nineteenth-century practice of property qualifications for voting.¹⁸

Today, the possession of private property by the corporate giants transgresses all national and regional borders, and has nothing to do with local or public identity. The connection of property is with *profitability*. It is doubtful whether even liberal defenders of private property like John Locke could be invoked to justify in the name of human rights the fabulous possessions of private corporations. Even though one may not find in Locke a social restraint on private ownership, nevertheless, even for him private property is intimately connected with actual use, on which basis appropriation takes place. In the case of mod-

ern corporate possession, it is no more a question of use, nor a legitimate space conducive to the exercise of freedom and self-expression as in the case of individuals, but simply a means for maximizing profit. Private property has become a matter of “control of a part of the material world and/or its resources”.¹⁹ In a situation of scarcity of resources — as in the case of the nations of the South — the unrestrained possession of wealth and property by transnational business enterprises is an affront to the basic rights of the poor.

Part II

In short, we face today a situation when those forces that most violate the basic rights of the poor take shelter under the human rights’ protection! We are left with the disturbing question whether human rights protect the poor or defend the powerful. It is high time now to redeem the human rights instrumentality and direct it towards the cause of the marginalized. This calls, first and foremost, for a different point of departure, a different set of philosophical presuppositions and spiritual orientation than the values centred on crass individualism and profit-motives at work in neo-liberal thought and economy. Secondly, operationalizing human rights in favour of the poor demands historically and culturally rooted means and strategies. This part of the essay is an attempt to address very briefly both these issues against the background of the situation prevailing in the South.

***Dukkha* — The Starting Point of Human Rights**

The category *individual* does not really seem to bring out the poor in their concrete historical reality. We grasp their reality when we approach them not as abstract individuals, but as *subjects* and as *victims* placed within a concrete history. To these victims of an unjust world, it makes a lot of sense when the discourse on human rights starts with the many negations and deprivations they are subjected to. Starvation and death, lack of basic medical facility and chronic illness, negation of even a roof overhead to protect themselves from the ravages of nature, total illiteracy and powerlessness — such is the condition of the victims in our world. This whole situation of *dukkha* - suffering — should be the starting point for any effective praxis of human rights and a meaningful discourse on it. The inter-connection between poverty and violation of human rights is graphically described by the Asian Human Rights Commission:

Widespread poverty, even in States which have achieved a high rate of economic de-

velopment, is a principal cause of the violation of rights. Poverty forces individuals and families and communities into the alienation of their rights: prostitution, child labour, slavery, sale of human organs and the mutilation of the body to enhance the capacity to beg. A life of dignity is impossible in the midst of poverty.²⁰

In the face of such poverty, suffering and negations, how could anyone dare to begin a philosophical discourse on human rights with the abstraction of individual as understood in the liberal tradition? And to whose benefit? It is undeniable that, in spite of the various strands of thought that went to make up the human rights framework, in its core it still reflects the stamp of the liberal tradition, with the individual and his (not her) freedom as the focus. One may, of course, enter into fine philosophical distinctions and debates on the foundations of human rights. However, no amount of substantialistic philosophical musings nurtured in the cradle of liberalism can offer any chances of coming to grips with the grim reality of poverty and deprivation of the victims. On the contrary, such an ahistorical liberal approach could serve the inversion of human rights about which I spoke in the first part. We will be able to redeem human rights from the contemporary inversions if we shift our focus of discourse from an abstractly conceived individual to *concrete historical subjects and victims*.

Even more, it is important that the victims themselves become active subjects of the human rights discourse. From contemporary linguistics and theories on the relationship of language and society, we know that discourses are not simply representations of reality, but that they make their own contribution to construct reality in a particular form. The inversion of human rights takes place because the *élites* and the powerful seem to have the monopoly over the human rights discourse. What kind of discourse on human rights is made and by whom, then, is very important, since this has far-reaching social and political consequences. Our efforts today should go in the direction of *restoring the human rights discourse to the poor as the primary subjects*.

A Spirituality and Anthropology in the Alphabet of the Victims

To really serve the cause of the poor, a spiritual approach to human rights is called for. Respect for the marginalized and their legitimate rights cannot result simply from a general intellectual perception of the equality of all and its formulation in statements. History amply bears out how the project of the Enlightenment could co-habit with the practice of slav-

ery, colonization of peoples and suppression of women's rights, and with what devastating consequences!²¹ Unless human rights become part of a deeper spiritual quest and an expression of the "soul-force" (Gandhi), the scandalous cleavage between theoretical affirmations and praxis is bound to continue. *Duhkha*, as already noted, is that from which a vibrant spiritual realization of human rights and its practice could stem. In modern times, Mahatma Gandhi, in the thick of his political engagements, underlined the importance of ahimsa — not inflicting suffering on others (which translated could be called non-violation of human rights).

The respect for the dignity of others and desisting from inflicting suffering on them (by way of concentration of power, exploitation and injustice) flow from another kind of anthropology. The human spells differently in the world of victims. In this anthropology, human beings are not primarily ethical beings who follow certain principles of conduct because these are in conformity to reason. There is something even deeper than ethics and reason. *Human beings are those who have deep in them the capacity to be affected by the suffering of others.* It is by awakening this inherent power that we lay a lasting foundation for respect for others and for the removal of their suffering. In other words, human beings are defined not simply in terms of reason; human beings are *compassionate beings*. In this anthropological perspective, human rights are expressions of the compassion for the suffering of the poor. Human suffering and compassion offer the anthropological and spiritual key to interpret human rights as the rights of the poor.

There are peoples and cultures for whom anything related to law brings with it a sense of obligation: the best way to give effect to anything is to convert it into legal language. But for most peoples in the South this may not be the case. Anyone conversant with the societies in the South will know that many of the modern laws and constitutions remain dead-letters and they are observed more in breach.²² In other words, a legal approach to human rights couched in a formal and abstract anthropology dissociated from the concrete historical subjects and victims — whether one likes it or not — stands little chance of being listened to. It does not carry conviction unless it becomes a part of a *spiritual* outlook towards others and the *vasudeva kutumbakam* — the whole human family. It is the appeal to the suffering of others and the activation of compassion that can lead to the fulfilment of ethical and legal requirements.

Historicization of Human Rights

Anything turned into abstraction could easily be

manipulated to serve vested interests. The inversion of human rights will continue to happen if these rights remain an abstract legal entity, like icing on the cake. This is all the more so when this set of rights is perceived as having come into being through a history which the people of the South do not share. The danger of inversion and alienation in a particular society could be overcome if we fill these rights with concrete social, cultural and political contents drawing from the history of that particular society. The need for this creative contextualization was expressed in the 1993 Bangkok Declaration:

...While human rights are universal in nature, they must be considered in the context of a dynamic and evolving process of international norm-setting, bearing in mind the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds.²³

The *historical* context is particularly important, so that the human rights take root among a people. The many struggles the societies of the South have waged against oppression and domination unfold before us deeper insights into the ways in which these societies have sought to protect the human, specially those who were weak and marginalized.

In South Asia, for example, the experience of human dignity and rights were implicitly present in the resistance to the hierarchy of the caste system, the central organizing principle of the society. Through the centuries, men and women of deep humanism and indomitable courage fought valiantly against the caste oppression that went manifestly against human dignity and rights.²⁴ This has given birth to a rich body of literature which is the point of reference even today for the masses of the people when it comes to understanding the spirit and practice of human rights. How this challenge to a hierarchical order of society has endured in the South Asian tradition to this day comes out in a recent book based on an empirical study by Steven Parish.²⁵

In the West, as is well-known, the beginnings of the human rights tradition goes back to the effort to check the sovereign power of the despotic ruler, and later the absolutist State. For the nations of the South, the experience with the issue of human rights in modern times is connected with their *struggle against the colonial powers*.²⁶ The illegal occupation of their lands and usurpation of their natural resources by the colonizers led the indigenous peoples to challenge the colonial administration and its violence. We may recall here such tragedies as the massacre by the British army in Jallianwala Bagh in Punjab where numerous innocent people were killed. Nationalist struggles against colonial rulers were the concrete form of claim-

ing legitimate rights by human beings who were enslaved in their own lands. This struggle for rights was not confined to well-known leaders and movements. There were innumerable struggles of the subaltern peoples at the local level — less known, perhaps, but significant — which broke the back of the colonial power.²⁷

The assumption at the time of national independence was that the establishment of a post-colonial State would lead to a governance that is respectful of the dignity and rights of the people. Nilanjan Dutta points out what happened, instead, after Independence:

The reins of the State were taken up by the same people who had once championed the ‘right to oppose the government’. And ironically, their perceptions had now changed. The ‘infant State’, they now felt, had to be protected even at the cost of some rights of the citizens. The hearts of the people, on the other hand, were filled with new aspirations. They wanted the State immediately to satisfy their hunger not only for basic human needs like food, clothing and shelter, but also rights and justice which had eluded them under two centuries of colonial rule. The interests of the State and the interests of the people stood pitted against each other.²⁸

Today the story of human rights in many nations of the South is one in which the poor and marginalized face repressive and authoritarian regimes. Further, for all practical purposes we are in the context of an economic war on the poor by the forces of globalization to which the post-colonial States have now succumbed. Fighting against the new set of violations unleashed against them requires appropriate means and strategies.

Human rights would make sense when they are placed in continuity with this historical process and tradition of resistance. The memory of these struggles is important, since it can inspire among the victims of today a sense of confidence and hope. There is then less likelihood of these rights being inverted and bent so as to serve the cause of the powerful.

Activation of Civil Society

Any form of power needs to be checked and its wings clipped, so that it does not take flight into anti-human subterfuges, or practice arbitrariness and absolutism. In present day circumstances, if the State and the economic regime are to be made accountable in terms of human rights, we require a vibrant civil society. It is an important means to protect the poor and ensure them of their legitimate democratic rights.

Civil society is something between the State and the individual. The issue is that of “expanding people’s space” where they could come together, interact, debate, take up questions of polity. According to Neera Chandhoke, “the values of civil society are those of political participation, State accountability, and publicity of politics...; the institutions of civil society are associational and representative forums, a free press and social associations”.²⁹ In short, civil society is the space where people interrogate the State and contest its ways that go counter to the public welfare.

At a time when the State as well as the globalizing forces have turned out to be the most callous violators of human rights, civil society has a crucial role to play. In many countries of the South there are authoritarian or ‘patriarchal’ regimes which on the basis of the doctrine of national sovereignty imagine that they can with impunity deny civil and democratic rights to the people. Even in countries with more open modes of governance, democracy and democratic institutions have become almost a kind of empty ritual and sham. The post-colonial States of the South — both authoritarian and apparently democratic — have heightened their power in the name of development ideology, which means that development ideology was coupled with theories of modernization (read economic liberalization and market). The ideology of development has become the *raison d’état* and a convenient justification for violating the basic rights of the people. We may think of situations in which indigenous people and tribals have been displaced for the execution of so-called development projects. It is interesting to note that in several countries of sub-Saharan Africa the ideology of development is invoked to legitimize the single-party political systems.

Precisely because civil society is an important means for the enforcement of human rights, the State and the market today want to encroach upon it and appropriate it for themselves. Particularly interesting is the way the market forces are claiming the space of civil society for their own ends. The capitalist market finds in civil society a means to weaken the State, so as to pursue its agenda of profit without the irritants of State control. As Ananta Giri rightly points out,

Civil society today is a globally valorized discourse but its contemporary valorization makes it an ally of the market, the liberated and liberalized non-State public sphere where there exists rule of law so that people can exercise their “freedom of choice”. Thus propagation of civil society through the package of market gains currency in popular consciousness when the agents of market capitalism such as the World Bank today are also the votaries of civil society.³⁰

For this reason, civil society needs today to be closely linked to new social movements. It is this linkage that can prevent it from being hijacked by the all-pervading market forces.

New Social Movements and Human Rights

In a broad sense, social and autonomy movements are part of civil society. It is through concrete and contextual social movements that civil society acquires flesh and bone. The commitment of many social movements and Non-Governmental Organizations to take up at a political level the issues of exploited children, victimized women, homeless refugees, discriminated migrant workers, opens up a large space for people's self affirmation and participation. In spite of the many limitations, these social movements represent a hopeful sign for the defence of human dignity and the rights of the poor in the nations of the South.

There is another reason why social movements are so crucial in terms of realizing the spirit and goal of human rights. It is a fact that the effectiveness of the present-day human rights discourse remains incomplete inasmuch as it does not reflect all the areas and spheres in which the dignity of human beings are violated in the concrete. New historical situations and social contexts bring us face to face with new victims whose dignity and rights need to be defended. Social movements are also, then, *sources* for the formulation of new human rights. In that sense, we understand why the present-day human rights instrumentality needs to be completed by the sustained struggle of the victims.

These movements also are schools for human rights education. Education goes beyond imparting knowledge and awareness about the present set of human rights. From the victims' point of view, a chief reason why rights are denied or violated is because people are illiterate. The lack of education renders the poor powerless and vulnerable. Experience amply proves that it is poverty and powerlessness which causes the poor to be victims of human rights violations. Equipping the poor with education is in the line of protecting them from the violent onslaught of exploitative forces. And this education needs to take into account the fact that the poor live in a culture of orality.³¹ In other words, education is the fundamental form of security against violation of human rights, and this important role is performed effectively and concretely by the social movements.

Conclusion

At the turn of the new century, humanity remains with many unanswered questions in every sphere of

life. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was supposed to be a "a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations".³² Whether we can have a sense of achievement at the turn of the century is a disturbing question. Are we not perhaps moving towards a countdown? The crisis of human rights has been caused in the main by the States, which are becoming violators of human rights in alliance with transnational capital and market. Together, they have waged a war on the defenceless poor. Countering these new avatars of injustice is a crucial and critical task before us as committed and responsible citizens in our societies.

We realize the gravity and complexity of the new task when we realize that these very forces opposed to dignity and human rights are the ones trying to appropriate the human rights and the discourse on them. There is an inherent incompatibility between the market — the symbol of the dominant economy — and the practice of human rights. That is why it is important that human rights become truly the rights in favour of the victims; that they are interpreted with "*positional objectivity*" — to use an expression of Amrtya Sen, the eminent Indian economist.

The restoration of human rights back to the poor calls for certain measures. From a theoretical perspective, debates on the universality of human rights and cultural particularities still retain their validity. But more important today is that such a discourse be related to the concrete social, cultural and political processes. Moreover, the human rights instrumentality needs to be imbued by a spiritual vision that focuses on the *suffering of the victims*. Ultimately we are confronted with the pain inflicted on the poor and the many negations to which they are subjected.

The more human rights are able to concretely protect the excluded and the poor, the more they will grow in *universality*. Similarly it is through the many struggles of the civil society and social movements that the present set of human rights will become progressively *more comprehensive*. For there are still far too many areas of discrimination against the victims and of violation against their dignity. The effectiveness of the human rights is still in evolution and will depend upon the way each particular society relates them to its own indigenous history of resistance to inhumanity of every kind. Whatever measures are taken, the crucial question remains whether we place the "*sovereignty of the victims*" over that of the State and of the "free market". The key to free the human rights from inversions will depend upon this. There are miles to go.

Notes

¹ At the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal

(1945-1946), army officials had to respond not only to crimes related to war, but to “*crimes against humanity*” perpetrated against innocent civilians, independent of whether what they did was in obedience to a command from higher authorities.

² Felix Wilfred, “Postmodernity and Third World Societies”. A paper presented at a National Conference on “Postmodernity and Critical Theory” sponsored by the Indian Council of Philosophical Research and held in Chennai, August, 1997. (Publication along with the proceedings of the Conference awaited).

³ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights found their elaboration and completion in the two major covenants that followed: The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966). Together they constitute the International Bill of Rights.

⁴ We have the earliest case associated with the genesis of the Magna Carta (1215) when King John was forced by the lords to acknowledge and sign that a sovereign is not above the law.

⁵ Cf. Anuradha Mittal and Anantha Krisnan, “Policy of Hunger and Right to food”, in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1 February 1997, pp. 200-4.

⁶ Cf. Rebecca J. Cook (ed.), *Human Rights of Women: National and International Perspectives*, University of Pennsylvania Press; 1994.

⁷ Cf. Oliver Mendelsohn and Upendra Baxi (eds.), *The Rights of Subordinated Peoples*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996.

⁸ The Vienna Human Rights Conference of 1993 was like a mirror on which one could see reflected the present state of human rights in the world, both in praxis and in theorizing. The shifts in focus of issues as well as the politics of human rights could be observed during this Conference. For details, cf. G. Haragopal, *Political Economy of Human Rights*, Mumbai: Himalaya Publishing House, 1997, specially pp. 41-64 (reflection on Vienna Conference). For a general overview of North-South relationships, cf. *The Challenge to the South. The Report of the South Commission* (under the chairmanship of Julius K. Nyerere), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

⁹ For example, cf. K. Srinivasulu, “Impact of Liberalization on “Beedi Workers”, in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 15 March 1997, pp. 515-7.

¹⁰ For an insightful case study of the effects on women, cf. Akua Kueyehia, “The Impact of Structural Adjustment Programmes on Women, International Human Rights: The Example of Ghana”, in Cook (ed.), *op.cit.* 42236.

¹¹ Cf. Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus. The Caste System and Its Implications*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988.

¹² This can be witnessed in every sphere of life under the imprint of modernity. For example, in the field of culture, orientalism, as so well elucidated by Edward Said, was the accumulation of knowledge about the colonized and the subjugated. It was an admirable museum of knowledge, but without people, without subjects. Cf. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978; Id., *Culture and Imperialism*, London: Vintage, 1993.

¹³ “Patriarchalism” is an expression Anthony Woodiwiss culls out from Max Weber and employs to depict the form of authority exercised by the East Asia States. For an excellent study on the complex issue of this form of benevolent but centralized authority with the practice of human rights, cf. Anthony Woodiwiss, *Glo-*

balization, Human Rights and Labour Law in Pacific Asia, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

¹⁴ Rajni Kothari, *Rethinking Development. In search of Humane Alternatives*, Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1990, p. 193.

¹⁵ Manoranjan Mahanty *et al.* (eds.) *People's Rights. Social Movements and the State in the Third World*, Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998.

¹⁶ As cited in the daily *The Hindu*, 10 September 1998, p. 14.

¹⁷ Corporations are jurists persons — that is, artificial entities formed by human beings to which the law attributes legal personality for the pursuit of social and economic purposes. They have no physical existence, but, as persons, they participate in legal life and are capable of holding property in their own home”. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (15th edition), Macropaedia, vol. 15, “Property Law,” p. 50.

¹⁸ Stephen G. O’Kane, “What Right to Private Property?” in *Economy and Society*, vol. 26, No. 4 (1997), p. 457.

¹⁹ O’Kane, *art. cit.* p. 465.

²⁰ *Our Common Humanity: The Asian Charter on Human Rights*, by Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), Hong Kong, No. 2.4.

²¹ Cf. Ziauddin Sader *et al.*, *The Blinded Eye. 500 Years of Columbus*, Goa: The Other India Press, 1993.

²² For the Indian situation, cf. March Galanter, *Law and Society in Modern India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997.

²³ As quoted in Dato’Param Cumaraswamy, “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Is it Universal?” in *Human Rights Law Journal*, vol. 19, nn. 9-12, p. 476.

²⁴ S.C. Malik (ed.), *Dissent, Protest and Reform in Indian Civilization*, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1997.

²⁵ Steven M. Parish, *Hierarchy and Its Discontents*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998.

²⁶ Cf. Michael R. Anderson and Sumita Guha (eds.), *Changing Concepts of Rights and Justice in South Asia*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, specially pp. 275ff.

²⁷ For the number of insightful case-studies, cf. the well-known multi-volume *Subaltern Studies* edited initially by Ranajit Guha, Oxford University Press, 1987; cf. Id., *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994.

²⁸ Nilanjan Dutta, “From Subjects to Citizens: Towards a History of Indian Civil Rights Movement”, in Anderson and Guha (eds.), *op. cit.* p. 280.

²⁹ Neera Chandhoke, *State and Civil Society. Explorations in Political Theory*, Delhi: Sage Publications, 1995, p. 9; cf. also Id., “The Assertion of Civil Society Against the State: The Case of the Post-Colonial World”, in Mahanty *et al.* (eds.), *op. cit.* pp. 29-43.

³⁰ Ananta Kumar Giri, “Rethinking Civil Society”, *Working Paper* n. 152, Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai, 1998, front page abstract.

³¹ Felix Wilfred, “Orality and Literacy: Contrast, Convergence and Dialectics”. Key-note address delivered at a national conference in the Folklore Resources and Research Centre, Palayamkottai, August 17-22, 1998. The text of the address is to appear in the forthcoming issue of *South Indian Folklorist*.

³² Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations, 10 December 1948.

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Dr Xavier Kochuparampil

La Tolérance-Intolérance Religieuse en Inde

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L'Inde est le berceau de quatre religions mondiales : l'hindouisme, le bouddhisme, le sikhisme et le jaïnisme. Deux autres religions mondiales, le christianisme et l'islam vinrent dans ce pays durant le premier siècle de leur existence. Pendant des siècles, les chrétiens vécurent en Inde aux côtés d'une grande majorité de non-chrétiens, surtout des hindous. Bien que connue pendant des siècles comme un pays de tolérance religieuse, en Inde la dysharmonie communautaire, l'intolérance religieuse, le fondamentalisme et toutes sortes de violence sont en augmentation. Pourquoi ce changement d'attitude du peuple indien ? Ce court article essaye de comprendre quelques-unes des nouvelles tendances qui se font jour en matière d'harmonie communautaire en Inde.

Une république démocratique

La question de tolérance ou d'intolérance dépend beaucoup de la rencontre entre les différentes religions qui coexistent dans un même pays. Pendant des siècles, les Indiens ont vécu dans une société de pluralisme religieux. Bien que toutes les grandes religions possèdent des fidèles en Inde, l'hindouisme est la religion dominante avec environ 90 % d'une population d'environ 950 millions. Cependant, il faut savoir que la nation indienne n'est pas constitutionnellement une nation hindoue, comme le sont de nombreuses nations islamiques ou chrétiennes. Constitutionnellement, l'Inde reste une république démocratique et souveraine où toutes les religions jouissent d'un statut égal. De plus, les minorités ethniques ou religieuses ont des privilèges accordés par la constitution.

Attitude de tolérance

L'attitude traditionnelle hindoue envers l'islam ou la chrétienté a été de tolérance. L'existence d'une petite communauté de chrétiens en Inde du sud depuis le premier siècle est la meilleure preuve de l'attitude de tolérance de l'hindouisme.

L'hindouisme, qui est considéré comme la plus ancienne des religions, peut difficilement être appelé religion dans le même sens que le christianisme. C'est en fait un faisceau de traditions religieuses. N'importe qui, qu'il soit théiste ou athée, sceptique ou agnostique, peut trouver place en hindouisme. C'est une masse complexe de systèmes sociaux, religieux, philosophiques mêlés aux traditions et mythes de tous les peuples qui y sont entrés à différents siècles. Nous l'appelons un parlement de religions unifiées par certaines croyances et pratiques communes.

Cela embrasse tout, et son esprit accommodant est bien connu. Il peut même embrasser des croyances et des pratiques contradictoires. L'ancien politicien Jawaharlal Nehru a noté : *“Son esprit essentiel est : vivre et laisser vivre”*. La religion, pour l'hindou est une expérience, ou une attitude d'esprit, comme l'observe S. Radhakrishnan, philosophe et homme d'État indien. Il continue : *“La religion n'est pas une idée mais un pouvoir, pas une proposition intellectuelle mais une vie de conviction. La religion est la conscience d'une réalité ultime, non une théorie”*.

L'hindouisme reconnaît l'omniprésence de Dieu. Donc, pour l'hindou, le sens du sacré concerne tout l'ordre de la nature. Pour l'hindou, tout est sacré dans l'univers : la terre et le ciel, les montagnes et les arbres, les rivières et surtout les êtres humains. Le croyant hindou n'a jamais perdu le sens du sacré, et il n'est pas un idolâtre au sens ordinaire du terme. Il voit l'univers comme rempli de la présence de Dieu ; par conséquent, tout mérite vénération. C'est cette fondamentale manière de voir qui a créé les attitudes de base hindoues, comme la tolérance culturelle et religieuse, la non-violence, le régime végétarien, etc.

Pour l'hindou, chaque dieu est seulement une manifestation de l'Être unique et absolu et chaque idole n'est que la présence sacramentelle de l'esprit unique et infini. Dans les Ecritures hindoues on peut trouver

facilement des passages qui soutiennent le polythéisme, le monothéisme et le panthéisme, aussi bien que les croyances aux démons, aux héros ou aux ancêtres. Dieu se manifeste dans chaque forme de l'univers. Donc il est possible de le vénérer sous la forme d'un animal ou d'un arbre. Toute l'Inde est une terre sacrée, un objet de vénération pour les Indiens. Les lieux et rivières sacrés sont des centres de pèlerinage fameux. Les pratiques religieuses des pèlerinages, de la lecture des textes sacrés, de la vénération des dieux dans les lieux saints existent toujours en Inde. Culture indienne et religion hindoue sont très liées. Nous pouvons les distinguer, mais avec difficulté.

Les religions ne sont *“rien d'autre que des routes différentes conduisant au même but unique”*. Toutes les Écritures hindoues importantes enseignent qu'il y a plusieurs routes vers Dieu. Le christianisme est lui aussi une des nombreuses routes vers Dieu. En conséquence, ils ont seulement de l'admiration et du respect pour les actions charitables des chrétiens et pour leurs institutions d'éducation. Mais la question de conversion au christianisme ne se pose pratiquement pas. Ils n'aiment pas du tout l'aspect d'évangélisation du travail missionnaire ainsi que la propagande religieuse et les efforts pour convertir les hindous au christianisme. Tout au plus pensent-ils que le christianisme peut contribuer aussi à rendre le rôle de la religion plus accessible à l'homme moderne. Mais le christianisme ne remplace pas l'hindouisme. L'hindouisme traditionnel ne fait pas de prosélytisme, car la religion vient avec le don gratuit de l'existence. Donc, d'après la manière de penser de l'hindou, cela n'a pas de sens de demander à quelqu'un une totale conversion à quelque chose qu'il n'est pas. Ce que l'hindouisme défend, contre le christianisme, c'est le droit des hindous à leur religion comme l'expression la plus parfaite de la religion éternelle. Il y a toujours une attitude de bienveillance de la part des hindous envers la religion chrétienne car ils la considèrent comme une religion soeur qui peut aussi mener l'homme à sa perfection. Toutes les religions sont bonnes dans la mesure où elles conduisent l'homme à la perfection. Mais aucun hindou n'acceptera la prétention exclusive du christianisme à être la seule religion révélée. Ils ne peuvent pas comprendre comment les chrétiens appellent l'hindouisme une religion naturelle, et le christianisme une religion surnaturelle. D'après K.M.Panikkar, un illustre savant du Kerala, cette attitude de supériorité est l'une des raisons de l'échec de la mission chrétienne en Asie.

De plus, la chrétienté occidentale n'a jamais été un idéal pour les hindous. Ils ne peuvent pas la voir comme distincte du colonialisme. K.M.Panikkar, le premier Asiatique qui a étudié l'influence occidentale en Asie,

a vu les missionnaires comme les *“agents avancés de l'impérialisme et les convertis chrétiens comme une cinquième colonne”*. Le christianisme est considéré comme de l'impérialisme dans un habit religieux. Par conséquent, le christianisme reste une religion étrangère qu'ils peuvent difficilement placer dans le contexte dans le contexte socio-culturel de l'Inde. Tout au plus, s'il y a une exception à ce qui a déjà été dit ci-dessus au sujet de la rencontre entre hindouisme et christianisme en Inde, ce serait l'exemple du Kerala avant le XVI^e siècle. Les anciennes communautés chrétiennes de Saint Thomas se considéraient elles-mêmes comme une des hautes castes de l'hindouisme et elles entretenaient toujours des relations cordiales avec les hindous.

Tenant compte de tout ce que nous avons dit, l'hindouisme est si riche qu'il peut même admettre le christianisme dans sa propre structure multiforme. En général, les hindous sont des gens tolérants. Leur attitude est celle d'une confraternité positive, pas celle d'une tolérance négative. Pour eux, la tolérance est un devoir, pas une simple concession. Ce n'est pas une question de politique ou simplement un expédient, mais un principe de vie spirituelle. Mais ils ne peuvent pas tolérer les chrétiens qui veulent assimiler les valeurs hindoues. Ils voient cela comme un vol. Ils accusent les chrétiens de ne connaître que les aspects périphériques de l'hindouisme, pas son cœur. D'une façon générale, l'hindouisme n'aime pas être imité.

Nouveaux courants en Inde

Quelques-uns des nouveaux courants de la société indienne sont une menace pour l'existence de minorités ethniques en général et spécialement pour les chrétiens. Sur tout le pays, on voit une sorte d'indifférence envers tout ce qui est spirituel et religieux. Le communautarisme reste un obstacle à l'unité et l'intégrité de la nation. La religion est politisée, même après cinquante ans d'indépendance. En fait, les différentes traditions religieuses pourraient avoir contribué de façon significative à l'unité nationale, une unité dans la diversité. Mais aujourd'hui le communautarisme pose un défi à l'unité de la nation. Les conflits interreligieux deviennent plus nombreux. Les missionnaires chrétiens sont harcelés et même brutalement assassinés dans plusieurs parties du pays. Le fondamentalisme religieux est un autre phénomène qui menace l'harmonie communautaire et la tolérance religieuse.

Communautarisme

Comme nous l'avons dit plus haut, la récente montée du *“communautarisme”* menace sérieusement l'harmonie communautaire en Inde. Le pluralisme religieux

est encore la marque de la société indienne. Depuis les temps immémoriaux, les religions ont prêché l'évangile de l'amour. Maintenant, ces mêmes religions sont devenues des agents et des instruments de haine et de violence. Les religions sont devenues des agents d'affrontements communautaires à cause de ce nouveau phénomène connu sous le nom de communautarisme. Mais qu'est exactement le communautarisme ? Comme le nom l'indique, il se rapporte à une communauté. Une communauté peut être formée sur la base d'une religion, d'une caste, d'une localité, une langue etc. Lorsque l'existence d'une communauté légitimement constituée est menacée par une autre communauté, la tension et le conflit commencent à désintégrer l'harmonie communautaire déjà existante. Le communautarisme, selon Herbans Mukhia, est l'organisation d'un groupe religieux exclusif sur la base de l'hostilité envers un ou plusieurs autres groupes au niveau social. Une telle hostilité est implicite dans l'exclusivité avec laquelle le groupe est organisé, même si son but explicite exclut l'hostilité envers d'autres groupes.

Le communautarisme est une idéologie : l'idéologie communautariste qui consiste en trois stades successifs. D'abord, tous ceux qui professent une religion particulière ont les mêmes intérêts en tous domaines : croyances religieuses, intérêts économiques, sociaux, culturels etc. Ensuite, l'intérêt séculier d'une religion peut être très différent de celui des fidèles d'une autre religion. Enfin, les intérêts séculiers ne sont pas seulement différents, ils sont hostiles à ceux des autres. Cette hostilité est le commencement de conflits et de la dysharmonie entre communautés. Dans une étude récente, Paul V. Parathazham, du département des sciences sociales à l'athaeneum pontifical de Pune, en Inde, a indiqué les facteurs responsables pour l'émergence et la croissance du communautarisme en Inde. Nous suivons ses conclusions. Très souvent, des intérêts cachés sont à la base des rivalités communautaires. Les groupes religieux et les partis politiques sont responsables de l'ouverture des conflits. La religion est politisée. La provocation immédiate du conflit est identifiée comme étant des questions religieuses ou politiques, parfois les deux. Il y a beaucoup d'exemples de conflits communautaires entre hindous, musulmans, chrétiens et sikhs. Très souvent, les communautés minoritaires sont les victimes du conflit. Ce n'est pas la religion qui est la cause du communautarisme. De plus, les leaders religieux ne sont pas eux-mêmes impliqués dans l'escalade de la violence. Ils s'efforcent de combattre la menace du communautarisme.

Fondamentalisme religieux

Les Indiens sont connus pour être très religieux.

Mais dernièrement le fondamentalisme s'insinue dans les communautés religieuses en Inde. Fondamentalisme et intolérance religieuse vont ensemble. Très souvent, les fondamentalistes proclament que seule leur religion est vraie. Ils acceptent tout ce que disent leurs chefs religieux et ils interprètent littéralement les Ecritures. Comme ils sont exclusifs dans leurs relations, ils n'aiment pas les dialogues ou mariages interreligieux. Plus haut est le degré de fondamentalisme, plus haut est le degré d'intolérance.

Il a été souligné par beaucoup que la résurgence du fondamentalisme en Inde est associée avec la question "*Babri-Masjid* ou *Ram Mandir*" à Ayodhya et le "décret sur les femmes musulmanes" au parlement indien. La démolition de la *Babri-Masjid* à Ayodhya le 6 décembre 1992 a détérioré grandement les relations entre hindous et musulmans. Ayodhya, d'après la tradition hindoue, est le lieu de naissance de Rama. Les hindous affirment que la mosquée avait été construite sur les ruines d'un temple de Rama par les envahisseurs musulmans. Le parti au pouvoir devait protéger la mosquée pendant que le BJP, alors dans l'opposition, voulait tout détruire pour reconstruire le temple de Rama. Bien que le Congrès au pouvoir ait promis de rebâtir la mosquée, il n'a pas tenu parole. Les fondamentalistes hindous, avec le support du gouvernement BJP, s'efforcent de rebâtir le temple de Rama. Et ceci n'est qu'un exemple de fondamentalisme religieux en Inde.

Intolérances religieuses

Comme nous le disions plus haut, fondamentalisme et intolérance sont comme les deux faces d'une même pièce. L'indifférentisme a cédé la place à l'intolérance. L'attitude de "*vivre et laisser vivre*" de la religion hindoue n'est plus ni prêchée ni pratiquée dans le pays. Le slogan présent des fondamentalistes hindous est : "*Hindou, Hindi, Hindoustan*" (religion hindoue, langue hindi, nation de l'hindoustan). Ceci signifie simplement que l'Inde est la nation des hindous. Musulmans et chrétiens sont des étrangers. Les forces réelles derrière la présente attitude d'intolérance envers les autres religions sont la politisation de la religion, les partis politiques communautaristes et divers intérêts cachés comme les propriétaires terriens ainsi que les sections riches de la société.

Toutes sortes de harcèlements existent dans le pays. Bien que la propagation de la foi soit garantie par la Constitution, des lois anticonversions ont été passées par beaucoup de gouvernements d'États. Tout cela a pour but d'interdire toute activité missionnaire. Même les entreprises charitables des missionnaires chrétiens sont qualifiées d'efforts pour obtenir des conversions.

Les missionnaires sont persécutés et brutalement tués en bien des parties du pays. En septembre dernier, un prêtre a été battu, déshabillé et montré en public par une foule déchaînée. Pendant la dernière décennie, plus de vingt cas de meurtres ou de brutalités ont été enregistrés, concernant quarante une victimes. Le témoignage en faveur de la justice, de la paix et de l'amour est devenu une affaire coûteuse dans les missions indiennes. Il y a eu un changement drastique dans l'attitude de la majorité hindoue envers les minorités. Il y avait une pression croissante pour l'admission dans les écoles et collèges chrétiens. Mais maintenant il y a des groupes qui sont toujours prêts à attaquer tout ce qui est chrétien dans les écoles. Les réunions de prière aussi sont mal comprises par les fondamentalistes. Ils accusent les prêtres chrétiens d'encourager les hindous à se convertir. Les hindous sont motivés par l'idéologie selon laquelle les chrétiens et les musulmans ne sont pas des Indiens. Même les réactions des chrétiens indiens aux récents tests nucléaires ont provoqué les fondamentalistes hindous. Ils avertissent maintenant les chrétiens qu'ils vont leur retirer "l'hospitalité" qui leur a été offerte pendant vingt siècles.

Il y a sûrement un sentiment de croissante aliénation dans les communautés religieuses en Inde. La méfiance croît entre la majorité hindoue et les diverses minorités, spécialement les chrétiens et les musulmans. Il faut noter que les attaques contre les chrétiens ont augmenté de façon déplorable depuis mars 1998, lorsque le nouveau gouvernement conduit par le BJP est arrivé au pouvoir. La récente décision du gouvernement de Delhi de ne pas donner aux Églises chrétiennes la considération qui est due aux lieux de culte à cause de leur usage de vin pour la messe est juste un des nombreux exemples d'intolérance de ce parti politique pro-hindou. *Vishwa Hindu Parishad*, une organisation fondamentaliste hindoue, a commencé à former 10 000 missionnaires pour travailler parmi les nouveaux convertis chrétiens pour les ramener à l'hindouisme. Les attaques contre les convertis dalits, la confiscation de bibles pour les brûler en public etc. sont en train de détruire le caractère séculier de la nation. L'agenda en faveur de l'hindouisme du BJP est la première cause de la dysharmonie communautaire, ainsi que les assauts contre les missionnaires chrétiens en Inde, un pays connu depuis des siècles comme une terre de non-violence et de tolérance religieuse. Par ailleurs, le travail de l'Église parmi les aborigènes ainsi que la popularité croissante des mouvements charismatiques semblent avoir consolidé l'opposition des mouvements hindous dans certaines régions du pays.

Comme nous l'avons déjà noté, la politisation de la religion est à la base de toutes ces méfiances entre les

religions. Fondamentalisme hindou est une contradiction dans les termes. Un hindou ne peut pas être fondamentaliste. Il embrasse tout. Tout le monde a une place dans l'hindouisme. Il n'y a pas en hindouisme de dogmes fondamentaux comme dans l'islam ou le christianisme. Tandis que les musulmans ou les chrétiens devraient être fondamentalistes. De plus, l'histoire de leurs missions montre que plus de conversions furent obtenues par l'épée que par la croix. Musulmans et chrétiens ont lutté les uns contre les autres au nom de la religion. Mais aujourd'hui, aucune religion ne prêche la violence et la haine. Toutes les religions prêchent l'amour. La société indienne doit être tout le temps rappelée au fait que le pluralisme est partie intégrale de la culture indienne et de son expérience religieuse. Dans ce but, il faut organiser des programmes de conscientisation à l'échelle nationale. Il faut démarrer le dialogue pour construire des ponts d'entente et de coopération de façon à encourager l'harmonie communautaire. Les politiciens avides de pouvoir doivent être tenus à l'écart des instances de commande religieuses. Et les leaders religieux ne devraient pas se mêler d'administration politique. De plus, l'administration doit agir avec fermeté et impartialité lorsque des incidents éclatent.

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Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini

'He Explained the Scripture to Us' (Luke 24:32)

Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini's address to the 43rd Plenary Assembly of the Italian Bishops' Conference in May 1997.

Preface

As the starting point of my reflections I should like to take an image: Jesus explaining the Scripture to the disciples on the Road to Emmaus. I should like to interpret the passage from the viewpoint of the listeners, 'sad...as if blind, so that they did not recognise him'. It is the position of someone who hears the exegesis of Scripture with a burning heart (though without immediately realising it) but nevertheless finds it hard to believe. It cannot have been easy for Jesus to convince his two companions, if the whole long journey, the shared evening meal and the breaking of bread were needed before their eyes were opened. The unfolding of the meaning of Scripture requires a slow, continuous process which lasts as long as a walk from afternoon to evening, an image of our pilgrimage through life. It is a long road which we all follow, until the moment when our eyes are opened to the vision of the Lamb who breaks the bread at the table of the Kingdom.

I. PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS

The Bible, ever more beautiful, ever more difficult

The more I get to know the Bible, the more beautiful it seems, but also the uglier. I apologise for using the word 'ugly' of something where I have the role of a loving son. But even a mother can, over the years, acquire features which are less attractive, though she still earns our love. The more I perceive over the years those aspects of the Bible which bring the light of Jesus to shine in our midst, the more I am pained by the difficulty of Scripture, pages which one does not read or accept readily, and which fit badly into the image of a humble and merciful Christ. What do I actually mean by this? There are many passages in the Bible (and I penetrate deeper into them each day) which radiate great riches, where Jesus' voice can be heard leading us to him. These are especially the Gos-

pels, and particularly the Beatitudes, the whole Sermon on the Mount, the Parables, mainly those passages in which charity is central, the signs of love and forgiveness, the majestic, more than human greatness which speaks from the Passion Narrative. Moreover I remember many Pauline passages where Paul emphasises the primacy of the Gospel over the Law, a primacy of grace over sin. There are also many passages which are not only difficult to explain, but hardly possible to read, difficult to accept and to digest.

These passages speak a language of force, describe massacres and murders as willed by God, and relate, unmoved, capital punishment and divine vengeance. Such passages are not confined to the Old Testament, but continue right through to the Book of Revelation. I mean the many passages (in Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Chronicles) which, on the whole, no longer have a place in the liturgy but are accessible to anyone who happens to open the book. If these passages already cause difficulty to me, and trigger off an instinctive resistance in me, then I ask myself how they affect someone who does not know Scripture very well, and knows nothing about hermeneutics.

With quite a few readings, particularly the extended second readings on feast days, I long to look into people's faces and to ask myself how much they will understand of those few lines which are already difficult to read in the original context. Do people really listen? How can I manage, in my all too short homily, to avoid even the worst misunderstandings? Exegesis struggled for centuries — like Jacob with the angel — with these texts, found answers and explanations by different methods, from the allegorical through the literary perspective to *relatio continua*, etc. In the first part of the document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, the various methods and viewpoints are listed. But it cannot be denied that despite the great modernity, even 'postmodernity', appropriate to many symbols and themes of the Bible, numerous passages in Holy Scripture remain strange to us. Neither our mentality, culture nor language can come to terms with many aspects of our religious sensibility. But disre-

gard of these difficulties or neglect of them as banal does not contribute to treating the Bible in such a way that it becomes the place of a blessed encounter with Christ.

Several Roads to Emmaus

My second personal observation is that growing familiarity with Holy Scripture occasions the need to distinguish the different levels of the biblical text. In the approach to the sacred text, and with it to Our Lord Jesus Christ, we inevitably take different routes at different levels, without the later ones ever replacing the earlier ones. It is as if there were not one road to Emmaus but a whole network of roads. I should like to distinguish schematically three phases or moments of approach to the Bible:

Firstly the philological-exegetical way which is today easily accessible to all, thanks to multiple aids (commentaries, introductions, dictionaries, atlases, encyclopaedias, CDs, etc). At this stage one becomes aware of the enormous riches contained in the texts, the vigour, even human and literary, which will never be researched in its entirety.

Parallel to growing familiarity with the linguistic-literary aspect of the Bible arises the need ever more forcefully to comprehend the meaning of the message and to compare it to one's own frame of reference. The text remains a necessary point of departure and reference, but from it arises a whole stream of reflections, questions, analyses, replies which nourish the mind and warm the heart. This is the moment when Jesus, on the road to Emmaus, not only quotes passages from Scripture but reveals to the Disciples the connections and direction of its all-embracing meaning.

Eventually comes the moment when the text in its precisely and objectively drawn contours tends to become blurred, when it abandons, as it were, its material consistency. It is then that the person of the Lord, the mystery of the Kingdom, shines through ever more clearly in anticipation of the heavenly vision and as a stimulus to prayer and contemplation.

I have here described the three classic steps of *lectio divina*, that is, *lectio*, *meditatio*, *contemplatio*. I do not want to say that there are no other methods of *lectio divina*. For this a comprehensive literature exists. I only wanted to establish that the different steps of *lectio*, however they are named, gradually alter their significance, their importance on the spiritual road, until they make possible an encounter with Jesus. Then the text somewhat pales before the spiritual presence. Every pastoral approach to Scripture must keep this way in mind and encourage it, without insisting too much on a definite scheme. We must allow for the

dynamic of prayer which arises from the Bible, including all its detours and setbacks. Therefore the encounter with Jesus through the Bible is, in the end, always a very personal adventure, a lonely struggle with an angel, a journey with the Holy Spirit, where pastoral guidance could only indicate the general direction, disposition and model. This is what happens in a School of the Word.

The Book and the Chalice

A third observation: with the growing familiarity with Holy Scripture comes the consciousness of how much the Bible is interwoven with the whole action of the Church, always present, beyond all differences and oppositions (Scripture, tradition, writing, sacraments), behind all fear of fundamentalism and extreme movements (biblicism, gnosticism, etc.). Perhaps it can be represented by an image used by a former Patriarch of Venice, Cardinal Roncalli. It is the image of *Alpha* and *Omega*, or of Book and Chalice. 'In the work of a Bishop and his priests the Holy Book, is like the *Alpha*. The *Omega*, on the other hand, if I may employ this apocalyptic expression, is the consecrated chalice on our daily altar. In the book the voice of Jesus is heard in our hearts, in the chalice Christ's blood, always a source of grace, reconciliation, salvation of the Church and of the whole world. Between these two poles all other letters of the alphabet can be found. But these are nothing unless they are supported and upheld by both extremes — the word of Jesus, which comes from Holy Scripture and re-echoes in all statements of holy Church, and the blood of Christ in the final sacrifice, as eternal source of grace and blessing' (Angelo Roncalli, *La Sacra Scrittura e S.Lorenzo Guitiniani*, Pastoral Letter, 1956).

Taking up this image proposed by the late Pope, I should like to say that the connection Bible-Tradition and Bible-Sacraments, and most of all Bible-Liturgy, is more than a merely theological position. It is more a practical knowledge which grows with time and experience and the grace of the Holy Spirit. But it does not grow merely by controversy, nor by warnings of very real dangers such as biblicism, a certain intellectualism, or even gnosticism, for these cannot be overcome merely by a hostile presentation. I refer particularly to a danger which was rightly pointed out by one of the Regional Conferences, namely that the Bible, 'especially in some groups, is considered more as an edifying exercise than an authentic search for an opening onto the person of Jesus Christ'. Such snares exist. They are best overcome by a constant pastoral approach to the Bible, together with the local and universal Church, with the help of the Bible Pastoral Letter. Not less Holy Scripture, but more and

better — such an approach to the Bible will save us from deviations which occasionally are to be feared and deplored.

II. SOME CONSEQUENCES FOR PASTORAL PRACTICE

From the foregoing personal observations which I have presented in schematic and allusive form, so as to invite my listeners to find some echo in their own experience and memory, I should like to deduce some pastoral consequences about the way in which the Bible can lead to a personal encounter with Jesus. In so doing I shall refer to the three personal observations I have just formulated,

1. The Bible constantly becomes more beautiful and more difficult.
2. There are several roads to Emmaus, or many varied attitudes to the text.
3. The Book and the Chalice, or the natural place of the Bible as a means to salvation.

1. Three practical consequences of the first observation.

Unity and awareness of limitation

We must not deny the fact that the approach to the Bible as a whole is difficult and in some ways must always be attempted anew, as much for new generations as in the course of our own life. Difficulties, resistance and rejection must be taken into account, but should not surprise us too much. To overcome these requires from every new generation a renewal of patience and love. In particular it seems that today we do not dispose of a rigorous theory of inspiration which could answer exhaustively all questions asked by modern people with regard to Holy Scripture. The theories established by the so-called biblical question (see *Providentissimus Deus*, 1893) remain on the whole valid. On the other hand, new attempts are welcome to find a modern, or rather a postmodern, language for the complex notion of a divinely inspired text, a text we call the Word of God. This text must be accepted as the Bible presents it, not a something abstract. It must be accepted with all its passages, the easy and the difficult ones, with the pages where God appears as speaker and those where human beings speak to God, answer him or simply talk to him, desperate or angry, just as anyone talks to other members of the family, recounts sayings through which basic understanding becomes clear, or everyday observations of the most varied kinds.

Exegesis over the last 50 years has made great strides, but much remains to be done concerning liter-

ary theories and theological perspectives before we get to the root of subjects like oral tradition, significance of writing, various forms and aspects of communication, narrative perception, etc. It follows that we must be patient and accept that not every question has a satisfactory answer. We must also help all seekers to distinguish what is clear from what is not, in humility and awareness of our own limitations.

Clarity first

In pastoral practice we must do as Jesus must certainly have done at Emmaus: he helped the Disciples first of all to see clarity and light, before drawing attention to darkness and shadows. The Church has always preferred certain passages or books in the Bible from which light was gathered to others. Although I am much in favour of a *lectio continua* of the Bible as it occurs in the liturgy (and as it was defended by that great lover of Scripture, Giuseppe Dossetti), I should like to say that getting to know the Bible is most of all getting to know the Gospels and Acts, familiarity with many Psalms, and with selected passages from the Pauline Epistles, from Exodus, Isaiah and Genesis, always viewed against the background of the death and Resurrection of Jesus.

Any systematic guidance to Bible reading must consider these main points and this Christological key to understanding which make it possible to bring together this rich and manifold world. On the other hand, we must accept that we come near to Christ through different historical and existential approaches in which the Bible is so rich. These must not be arbitrarily skipped. It is as if the unique word that God has spoken in history, in a thousand different places and contexts, in a thousand different tone-colours, must be grasped in the individual tones and their precise significance. Otherwise the harmony which repeats the basic theme in an overwhelming modal multiplicity cannot be achieved.

The School of the Word

The particular effectiveness of a School of the Word must be noted. A few central passages are chosen and set into a wider context, as an initiation and stimulus for a direct, personal contact with the biblical text. The School of the Word which already exists in many Dioceses — often as a Bishop's direct initiative to youth — must not be confused with exegetical reading, sermon or catechesis. All these forms retain their full validity and significance. It should rather be an incentive for those concerned. How do I find a text which speaks to me personally, by which I reach an encounter with the Lord who speaks to me in and

through the text?

So it becomes obvious how important it is to show our faithful, with the help of Bible Weeks and Bible Courses, that the Bible is a structured reality, at different levels. It requires a well-considered organic approach, rather than something uniform and monolithic, as certain charismatic groups sometimes suppose.

2. Three consequences of the second observation about the changing relation to the text.

Avoid schematic repetitions

In all activities of the biblical apostolate we must above all avoid getting stuck in a certain pattern. Changing moods, different levels of understanding and capacity to assimilate must determine the approach. A successful initiative (e.g. a School of the Word) is not valid always and everywhere, so that it can be adopted in every situation. I have considerable hesitations about supposed recipes for success. We must pay great attention to the constant changes in our target-group, be it negatively (habit or surfeit) or positively (the emergence of new existential questions). We must rethink our formulae and activities regularly and question them again and again.

This applies also to the liturgy of the Word outside the Eucharist. At the moment these seem to me too stereotyped. They have lost the capacity to lead people really to the text, as was the case when they were introduced at the time of the Second Vatican Council. At services of the Word I often have the impression that texts have been chosen hastily from a superficial preference. They are often too long or too dense, and they are normally for some reason hastily read out only once, without regard for the needs or the explicit or unspoken questions of the faithful. The choice of texts for the liturgy of the Word is a delicate decision and cannot be left to chance. The basis for this choice, as for the manner of presentation and explanation, must be geared to the situation of the listeners. Their understanding of the Scriptures and their most urgent problems in life must be taken into account.

Promote an encounter with the Lord

We must make the biblical text a companion for people in a truly spiritual way, a way which most of all promotes the knowledge of the Lord, rather than simply knowledge of the Bible. The purpose of the biblical apostolate in all its forms is not to create biblical experts, but men and women of prayer who let

the Bible lead them to knowledge of the Lord who calls them in the real situation of their lives, here and now. Naturally we must avoid shortcuts and must not give in to the illusion that from every page of the Bible some spiritual fruit will grow. We must bravely walk through the labyrinth of history and biblical language, keeping the aim always before our eyes and trusting the power of that Spirit through which Scripture needs to be read and understood. The old wisdom of the Imitation of Christ remains still today the golden rule for every approach to the Word of God, 'All holy books are to be read in the Spirit in which they were written'.

Formation of leaders

A third consequence concerns the formation of animators. Here too it is chiefly a question of the spirituality of these people in whom the wish to study the Bible, the desire to share their knowledge with others, arises from their longing for an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ. Future leaders should acquire all requisite specialist knowledge, including the study of biblical languages, even Hebrew, a tendency I observe more and more among the laity. With such a formation they are sure not to pick up incoherent, confusing elements, but acquire an authentic motivation, so as to get to know Jesus in Holy Scripture and to bring him to others. Places of training for leaders do not therefore have the task of forming biblical scholars. We do need experts, but special institutions are available for them, and catechetical schools can make their own valuable contribution. I am rather thinking of simple lay functions: leaders of Bible groups, those responsible for the neighbourhood apostolate, or 'visiting helpers' in the forefront of the popular mission. In the last few years I have had the chance to get to know many of these, and they are all people hungry and thirsty for Scripture. It is now for us, by prayer and a lived spirituality, to make this goodwill blossom.

3. Notes on the third observation, Book and Chalice.

For an integrated way

The different methods of using the Bible in pastoral care should complement each other so as to create a common way which alone leads to a full familiarity with the holy book of the Church. The pastoral writings of the Italian Episcopal Conference mention four forms of encounter with the Bible in the pastoral work of the Church: liturgical celebration, with a special emphasis on the homily, the way of introducing

catechesis, and generally the service of the Word, religious teaching in schools. To these I should like to add *lectio divina* in common.

For these and similar forms is relevant: 'Every one of these ways makes its own demands, but requires also close connection with other forms of expressing the faith with which the Church accompanies an encounter with the Bible'. A further contribution from the Bishops fits in here: in the biblical apostolate the starting-point must be already existing and uncontested premises, that is, premises which have their roots in *Dei Verbum iste*, n. 1, and which are there set out in more detail. It is a matter of achieving a reevaluation of the Bible in two forms: in one, in the different moments of the Church's life (liturgy, catechesis), in the other, in a direct approach to the biblical text. I should like to take up point 22 which neatly summarises what I have tried to say, 'the approach to the Bible in faith is itself precious, even if it is not closed in itself. It must remain independent in its methods, but also closely related to other forms of mediating the faith which are part of the Church's tradition (liturgy, catechesis). Two different complementary ways to the reappraisal of the Bible are relevant: the direct approach to the text and the promotion of biblical components in other channels mediating the faith, such as catechesis and celebration'.

Then comes the problem of a practical balance between these two ways. Is it better to bring the so-called estranged immediately into contact with the basic kerygmatic Bible texts or to lead them along the systematic way of catechesis? It seems to me that the different solutions are not opposed but complementary, and that the decision will always depend on practical considerations. In my experience with the 'chair for non-believers', of which I shall say more shortly, it is beneficial to harmonize both ways intelligently, with regard to the people concerned, their condition and the available time, even if the direct approach to the Bible has a strength and fascination which is perhaps absent from the slow systematic approach.

Practical examples for a diversified approach

To end these considerations of the synthesis of the different ways I should like to add a few practical examples of my experience of the different forms of approach. I want to sketch out five situations:

Holy Scripture and the search for the meaning

Holy Scripture and catechesis for adults

Holy Scripture and the family

Holy Scripture and the ways of vocation

Holy Scripture and youth

In our big cities there are today many people who are seeking. I mean mainly those who have had a Chris-

tian education, but who have then, sometimes quite early in life, turned away from the faith. The Italian Episcopal Conference has asked itself very seriously how they can help such people. I should like to put forward an initiative which I called somewhat provocatively the 'chair for non-believers', and where it is not primarily a matter of approach to the Bible. It starts from another point, namely from the reasons for loss of faith. People describe with great sincerity their way of life, seeking a meaning, their problems and doubts. We cannot confront these people straightaway with a page from Holy Scripture (in the sadness of the two Emmaus Disciples there was little explicitly biblical) — in fact this consequence will show itself relatively quickly. For even on those encounters the Bible proves itself quickly as a source for the great archetypes of humanity, with expressive symbols for all forms of human search for meaning. The starting-point will not necessarily be a passage from the Bible, as is the case with *lectio divina*, but rather doubts, problems and questions which very soon find their reflection in a page or an image in the Bible, and will lead some to thinking about themselves, others on the way to faith.

Holy Scripture and catechesis for adults

I am impressed by the practice of the so-called 'house Bible meetings' which present a new form of adult catechesis. They arise generally from the preparation of popular missions, or as a result of them, sometimes spontaneously. In these groups, led by animators with their own formation, there is at the beginning a passage from the Bible, after which the participants can turn to structured catechesis. In this connection I was surprised by the remark of a Regional Episcopal Conference which regretted the 'atomisation of the biblical apostolate, mostly restricted to a few groups, which does not show the relevant continuity, and is not integrated into the religious structure of the Church'. To me these house Bible groups seem a very good opportunity for our parishes as well as for the whole Diocese, as an opportunity for a wider public. I have been doing this for some years in Lent through my radio catechesis which is followed by hundreds of groups in numerous parishes. This achieves a formation in faith for adults which is not elitist, offers a certain continuity, and fits into the structure of Church life.

Holy Scripture and the family

This is one of the most difficult areas. Some traditions — I am thinking of the reading in common of the history of saints — have completely disappeared,

as also grace at meals. It is not easy to introduce new habits. The Diocese of Brixen has committed itself most energetically, where basic aids are handed out on a large scale, to enable families to read the Sunday readings on the previous evening. We must probably consider again the practice of the rosary; this practice of family prayer is still alive in some places and could be valuable as an introduction to praying with the Bible.

Holy Scripture and ways of vocation

Very useful was the following attempt: a group of young people aged 17-25 (about 150-200 each year) carry on for a year a living reflection on spiritual vocation. These are young people who want to fulfil the will of God without compromise and who do not exclude any call coming from God, but who are as yet unclear about the future. They submit themselves for a year to a rule of life and prayer, and receive spiritual guidance. I try, with the help of Scripture, to bring some clarity, for example, they should reflect for a year (one Sunday afternoon each month) on the Call of the prophet Samuel and his life (1 Sm 1-15). The contact with the Bible sharpens the consciousness of the self, of one's own resistance and anxieties, and puts the question: what does God want from me, in such a way that the personal decision becomes easier. The method used is that of a long and often repeated *lectio divina*, practised first in common, then in form of a personal prayer and finally in small groups with exchanges. Thanks to personal accounts which I have received in all these years I have been able to follow up the spiritual way of more than a thousand young people, and reconstruct the enormous difficulties which prevent in our times clear and brave decisions of this kind. At the same time I have been able to witness changes of position in the direction of the imitation of Christ, at the beginning of which stood the encounter with the Bible.

Holy Scripture and youth

I have already mentioned the Schools of the Word which are held in many Dioceses and often by the Bishop himself. In this 'school' are experienced the power of the biblical word and the longing of young people for authenticity and prayer. The same applies to quiet retreats with meditation on a biblical passage. It is important in all these approaches to the text that they create a climate of reflection and enable young people to let themselves be addressed personally by the word of the Bible. They discover, as I have often been told, that God really speaks about me and to me in this text. We must certainly trust again the

ability of the young to develop honest interests from apparent alienation and apathy, if they have the feeling that there is a text where I can find myself, a text which carries the fascination of a story and the progress to a predestined conclusion, which requires, here and now, honest answers.

III. CONCLUSIONS

May I be allowed two concluding points? The first I take from a contribution to regional conferences which, I think, resumes the meaning of my talk. It is said that this gathering should emphasize that in the belief of the Church and in the reading of the Bible in the context of prayer and conversion the answer lies to the urgent needs of the new evangelisation. This is particularly relevant for the request to form a laity mature in the faith, able to translate the Bible into today's world, as well as the request, against all modern tendencies to relativistic and syncretist religiosity, to strengthen the faith in Jesus as the One Saviour of the world.

The second conclusion is based on a letter which I received recently during Lent. It concerns my diocesan radio broadcasts on the Christology of John's Gospel. The letter came from a man of 50 in a Bible group, whom I do not know personally. To the question what a shepherd of souls expects when he wants to bring the Bible to people he writes:

"In these weeks of encounter, reading, listening and discussions, I have rediscovered a great truth, understood and completed with new knowledge — I need Jesus. He is the way for me, truth, life, bread and light. Without him I would be lost, in him and through him my life gains infinite worth, my daily actions become jewels of mysterious eternal beauty. What is so beautiful about it is that it comes to me spontaneously from the heart, thanks to your thoughts, Eminence, as if this truth had been slumbering, only waiting to be awoken. Now I know that the truths of my religion are not speculations of my intellect, but realities which are closely linked to my heart, my human nature. Now I no longer feel alone, I know that Jesus is with me, I know that I can find in Holy Scripture, in the Magisterium of the Church, answers to my deepest needs".

I wish that our words and attempts towards a biblical apostolate may always find hearts so ready to receive the seeds of the Word.

(Transl.: Henry Wansbrough)

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Catholic Biblical Federation.

Orlando Fals Borda

Mondialisation — Des Espaces pour les Peuples

Sans avoir l'air d'y toucher, certains articles, au bout d'une lecture attentive, nous brûlent les doigts ! C'est peut-être l'expérience qui attend le lecteur au terme de la réflexion proposée par Orlando Fals Borda. Professeur émérite à l'Institut des études politiques de l'Université nationale de Colombie à Bogota (Orlando Fals Borda a également exercé un mandat de député et de vice-ministre de l'Agriculture en Colombie. Il est l'auteur de nombreux livres sur les problèmes sociaux et la recherche participative), l'auteur se propose d'ouvrir des «espaces pour les peuples» au sein du processus de mondialisation. En apparence, pas de quoi faire frémir l'intérêt. Mais très vite, au détour d'un paragraphe innocent, voici qu'est remis en cause le «secret de la stabilité» du système planétaire «moderne».

L'accumulation constante du capital, les polarisations de classe et la propension des populations à subir l'oppression, jadis tenues pour des certitudes intangibles, sont considérées ici comme les vecteurs d'un développement nocif, notamment destructeur des valeurs culturelles et sociales du Sud. En découle un devoir absolu: le «développement» (même accompagné du noble qualificatif de «soutenable») et la «modernité» doivent être «débarrassés» et «purgés» des idéologies aliénantes qui les encomrent! Et par quels moyens? En valorisant trois types de luttes populaires: pour la réappropriation des ressources naturelles, pour la reconquête du pouvoir politique, pour la reconnaissance des cultures locales.

Ces «espaces» d'humanisation seront-ils capables de «réenchanter» le développement pris dans les mailles de la mondialisation? C'est le pari tenu par l'auteur. Ces pages, tirées d'une allocution au ministère des Affaires étrangères finlandais, en septembre 1998, nous ont semblé offrir une provocation salutaire. Même et surtout lorsqu'elles bousculent toutes nos idées sur le développement des peuples.

Albert Longchamp

Le grand sociologue américain C. Wright Mills faisait remarquer, en 1959, qu'«aujourd'hui, les problèmes des sociétés occidentales sont de façon quasi inévitable des problèmes universels» (C. Wright Mills: *The sociological imagination*. New York Oxford University Press, 1959). Il parlait déjà de «postmodernité» et pointait de manière astucieuse les premières caractéristiques du phénomène actuel de mondialisation: la tension entre raison et liberté considérées comme sources du bonheur. Selon lui, cette tension engendre un malaise et une certaine indifférence qui conduit à la formation d'un «robot satisfait» contrastant avec le modèle des Lumières révélateur d'un être humain créatif.

Depuis lors, évidemment, l'approche de ce qu'il est convenu d'appeler le processus de mondialisation a beaucoup évolué. A présent, nous savons que l'abondance des technologies ne peut être un indice de qualité de la vie: au contraire, cette profusion s'est avérée fatale et immorale à plusieurs égards. La raison ne conduit pas toujours à la liberté ou à l'éthique, encore moins au bonheur. Pourtant, le fameux Rapport Bruntland de 1987, qui a présenté le monde comme un «fragile ballon dans l'espace», a renforcé une attitude dirigiste à l'égard de la nature et une tendance à l'instrumentaliser. Ce rapport a bel et bien véhiculé le sentiment largement répandu d'un «cosmos désenchanté». Une voix en provenance du Sud s'est alors élevée pour rappeler que «ce dont nous avons besoin ce n'est pas d'un avenir com-

mun mais d'un avenir en tant que peuple» (Shiv Visvanathan (Arturo Escobar: *Encountering development, The making and unmaking of the third world*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995)).

Du Malaise au Doute

Au Sud, nous ne nous contentons pas habituellement de messages et d'interprétations rationnelles et techniques parce que notre pensée collective (*mana*) est fortement enracinée dans l'animisme, la mythologie, le mysticisme et les religions ésotériques. S'agissant du Rapport Bruntland, nous aurions pour le moins souhaité qu'il prenne en compte, de manière affective ou humaniste, la responsabilité collective de l'épuisement des ressources naturelles, spécialement celles des régions tropicales qui pour nous revêtent une importance vitale. Et que cette prise en compte soit accompagnée d'actions substantielles.

Qui sont les responsables d'une telle destruction matérielle et spirituelle? De nombreuses études ont montré le rôle dramatique joué par les tenants de la culture européenne qui, à partir du XVI^e siècle (Agnes Heller: *A global crisis of civilisation*, in Fals Borda, 1998), ont imposé des croyances et des normes chrétiennes et capitalistes à nos civilisations et communautés de base. Un héritage fondé sur une conception manichéenne de l'existence et qui s'est étendu aux extrémités les plus reculées de la planète, créant ce que Wallerstein (Immanuel

Wallerstein: *Spacetime as the basis of knowledge*, in Fals Borda, 1998) définissait comme «*notre système planétaire moderne*». Le secret de la stabilité de ce système reposait, selon lui, sur trois données: en premier lieu, sa capacité à accumuler sans fin du capital; ensuite, celle de favoriser une polarisation de classe toujours plus grande; enfin, la soumission des populations face aux injustices.

Comme on le sait, les cruautés initiales et les bénéfices retirés de la période coloniale furent, par la suite, transformés par un tour de passe-passe en «*modernité universaliste*» ou «*développement modernisant*» et présentés comme des objectifs et des méthodes qui devaient être adoptés par le Sud. Autre aberration: le «*développement*» s'est avéré avide d'accumulation de richesses au profit d'un petit nombre de nantis et créateur de polarisation et de misère aux dépens d'une majorité de gens honnêtes vivant au sein de «*populations cibles*» (Wolfgang Sachs: *The development dictionary: A guide to knowledge as power*, London: Zed Books, 1992).

Cette situation a généré des scrupules chez de nombreuses personnes au Nord: le malaise de C. Wright Mills a ouvert la voie à la notion de doute quant au devenir du monde. Ce doute doit être appréhendé en relation avec les problématiques espace-temps: de mon point de vue, ses origines sont essentiellement super-structurelles. Si nous prêtons attention aux analyses faites en 1997 au World Convergence Congress of Participatory Research (Orlando Fals Borda: *People's participation: challenge ahead*, New York/London, Apex Press, Intermediate Technology Publications), on découvre que le doute prend naissance dans le règne cruel de la violence, du vice, de la société de consommation, de la faim et de la pauvreté qui ont été imposés à la majorité des habitants de la planète depuis les guerres asiatiques des années 50. Mouvement accéléré par la disparition, au cours des années 80, de l'Etat-providence, des réglementations protectionnistes, et par l'imposition de politiques néolibérales. Les principales victimes de cette situation semblent avoir été les jeunes (manifestations de colère et de désespoir face à l'absence d'avenir), les personnes âgées (abandonnées par leurs enfants), les femmes (frustrées en permanence par le régime du patriarcat) et les groupes marginalisés (tentés par la délinquance). D'une manière générale, «*ne sachant pas où nous allons et comment nous allons faire, nous sommes mal à l'aise etangoissés*». Il en résulte une grande hypocrisie institutionnelle et de l'instabilité politique.

Aux remords capitalistes du Nord qui ont largement contribué à l'émergence de ce doute répond, au Sud, un appel renouvelé en faveur du particulier, du local et du culturel. Les activités mondiales et les effets qui en découlent, initiés par le «*développement modernisant*», ont entraîné une réaction du Sud qui entend défendre ses moyens traditionnels d'existence ainsi que l'environnement naturel et spécifique des banlieues comme

des zones rurales. Alors, le particulier, le différent, l'étrange ou le surprenant (pour le regard occidental) sont tout d'un coup perçus comme ne convenant pas aux processus mondiaux imposés et uniformisants. On en rencontre de nombreux exemples dans la littérature. Mais il va de soi que de nombreuses actions visant à contrecarrer les politiques néolibérales qui ont provoqué tant de décomposition sociale, de corruption, de chômage et de dérèglement dans le tissu social du Sud, restent à mettre en oeuvre.

Le Rôle de la Pauvreté

Il est curieux de constater que certaines avancées résultent du fait que le phénomène de polarisation de classe, initié par les tenants du capitalisme et du néolibéralisme, se nourrit de cette pauvreté et de ce chômage. Si l'on se situe d'un point de vue holistique, cette pratique s'avère en effet dangereuse pour tous les peuples, où qu'ils se trouvent, car la pauvreté est un facteur efficace d'entropie au sein des systèmes socio-économiques: les sociétés deviennent de plus en plus auto-destructrices et le «*développement*» détruit de manière constante tout ce qu'il y a comme ressources: naturelles, sociales, culturelles, humaines. Des ressources dont par ailleurs il ne peut se passer. D'où la nécessité d'une attention critique aux pauvres en tous lieux de la planète.

La pauvreté peut être mesurée en termes de revenu par tête d'habitant mais ces statistiques impressionnantes ne sont pas satisfaisantes ni représentatives si l'on veut analyser le système. Rahnema (Majid Rahnema: *Poverty*, in Sachs, 1992) attire l'attention sur un élément du système qui permet de vérifier cette entropie accélérée: c'est ce qu'il appelle «*les formes morales de la pauvreté*», qui se différencient de la conception calviniste selon laquelle la pauvreté reflète une insuffisance personnelle. Pour contrebalancer les effets destructeurs de la cupidité et de la recherche de profits apparaît aujourd'hui dans le Sud une réaction éthique visant à redéfinir la pauvreté, le dénuement et même l'ignorance comme des moteurs en faveur du changement ou encore des armes de transition et de défense contre la domination actuelle de la civilisation européenne.

Cette réaction peut contribuer à éradiquer la pauvreté économique et le chômage ainsi que les autres injustices, à condition de se donner une idéologie mondiale cohérente capable de les soustraire à la mondialisation capitaliste. Ainsi, les pratiques destructrices au niveau international pourront-elles être combattues grâce à un traitement mondial adapté. Cela semble évident et c'est la base sur laquelle s'appuie notre présente réflexion. Jetons rapidement un coup d'oeil sur quelques manifestations d'espoir, en particulier celles qui se concrétisent à travers la création d'espaces populaires dans les pays du Sud et qui, dans la perspective d'un avenir meilleur, allègent le poids des injustices engendrées par

le système capitaliste.

Occuper les espaces

Dans nos perspectives présentes, nous entendons par «espaces pour les peuples» des lieux spécifiques ou des endroits définis où variété et diversité font partie de la normalité, «où les gens tissent le présent avec des fils propres à leur histoire» (Sachs), souvent en se servant de la mémoire orale et collective. L'endroit ou le lieu sont des données fondamentales parce qu'elles sont comme une arène où se constituent les identités de vie, les institutions solidaires et coopératives, où la personnalité se forme, où les droits collectifs ont la priorité sur les droits individuels. D'où les références à des lieux spécifiques.

Au Sud, face au processus de mondialisation, la lutte pour la récupération de territoires et la défense des ressources naturelles est peut-être le mécanisme d'occupation des espaces populaires le plus significatif. Concrètement, cela signifie production de nourriture, au minimum pour la famille et pour les besoins de la communauté, afin d'échapper aux contraintes des multinationales de l'alimentation. Pour cela, les valeurs traditionnelles et la défense des droits fonciers sont grandement déterminants car ils sont l'occasion de créer des mouvements politiques et sociaux qui évoluent du micro au macro ou mûrissent de la protestation à la proposition. L'association Gaia ou Terre Mère, par exemple, constitue un premier mouvement pour des groupes autochtones tel que U'wa situé dans la région Est de la Colombie. La lutte pour la terre s'est avérée la seule voie permettant de stopper la pénétration des multinationales pétrolières. Cela s'est réalisé avec le soutien d'ONG du Nord une fois qu'elles en ont compris les enjeux.

Le succès d'U'wa a stimulé des mouvements indiens ailleurs, parfois grâce au réseau Internet. Dans le Chili prospère, les Mapuche se sont bruyamment opposés à une compagnie étrangère exploratrice d'énergie qui occupe leurs terres. En d'autres endroits, particulièrement dans la région amazonienne, des communautés autochtones, agressées par des biologistes à la recherche de plantes médicinales servant à fabriquer des substances génétiques de grande valeur pour le marché international, se sont aussi levées pour se défendre. Les scientifiques étrangers ont besoin du savoir des populations autochtones pour connaître les particularités des plantes et, malgré cela, les industries pharmaceutiques internationales ne veulent pas admettre qu'elles font de cette sagesse du vulgaire business. Néanmoins, à partir d'actions réussies, d'une mémoire vivace, d'une prise de conscience et d'une capacité de résistance locale, les chefs et les tribus sont aujourd'hui organisés en conseils nationaux. Grâce à ceux-ci, ils peuvent analyser les problèmes complexes posés par la modernité et défendre la biodiversité.

L'exploitation du bois de construction représente un

autre exemple significatif de l'organisation populaire. Pendant des décennies, les forêts situées sur la côte ouest de la Colombie étaient entre les mains de compagnies qui les exploitaient au profit de la consommation nationale et de l'exportation internationale. Ces entreprises se comportaient évidemment de manière dévastatrice non seulement vis-à-vis des forêts mais également des communautés noires qui les habitent et qui fournissent la main-d'oeuvre. Dans ce cas concret, l'occupation des espaces populaires s'est concrétisée par l'ouverture d'une brèche dans la Constitution (1991) qui reconnaissait le droit à la création de communautés riveraines autonomes possédant des titres de terres et de forêts. La première décision de ces communautés fut de regagner le droit au contrôle local à travers des conseils communautaires. A présent, les compagnies se retirent peu à peu de ces zones à l'image de ce qui est arrivé en Inde avec le mouvement Chipko et dans l'île de Luzon (Philippines) à Bukidnon.

Le plus grand mouvement paysan organisé et toujours en activité dans le Sud est celui des Sans Terre au Brésil (*Movimento dos Sem Terra*). Ce mouvement a seulement dix années d'existence et a démarré à la manière de la prise de possession d'un domaine agricole comme au temps de la colonisation. La famine sévissait et un appel au droit inaliénable à la vie avait été lancé. Tandis que les gouvernements brésiliens successifs manigançaient des affaires avec les multinationales de l'industrie et autorisaient l'implantation d'entreprises énormes à ramifications internationales, les paysans s'échinaient à assurer leur production agricole et alimentaire, non sans compter de nombreuses victimes. Aujourd'hui, des millions de paysans se sont mobilisés. Ils représentent dans leur pays un réel espoir de démocratie participative à travers leurs organisations de base et forment un leadership engagé et intègre. Des mouvements similaires bien que moins importants ont vu le jour au Zimbabwe, en Inde et dans de nombreux autres pays.

Un combat pour le pouvoir

Du point de vue de la recherche d'espaces et de démocratie, le combat pour le pouvoir politique est également un processus important dans le Sud, même s'il n'a pas toujours débouché sur des résultats positifs. Il a souvent conduit à des conflits sanglants du fait d'intérêts internationaux tels que ceux liés aux ventes d'armes. Dans ce cas de figure, les espaces populaires sont alors occupés par les armes et une culture de mort qui n'a pas nécessairement son origine dans le pays. De grandes entreprises capitalistes comme celles qui produisent et commercialisent des narcotiques, par exemple, n'ont que faire des frontières locales et nationales et doivent leur développement aux plantations de coca et de pavot. En même temps, elles permettent aux paysans de vivre et de gagner de bonnes sommes d'argent. Mais dans ce contexte, les agents de mort se multiplient et l'exploitation brise la vie communautaire. D'effrayants déplace-

ments en masse de familles pauvres en sont souvent la conséquence. Cependant, même dans ces circonstances défavorables les gens font la démonstration de leur capacité à se défendre par eux-mêmes, particulièrement à travers des pratiques d'aide mutuelle, tout en gardant l'espoir d'un retour pacifique aux terres de leurs ancêtres.

L'un des conflits les plus populaires aujourd'hui est celui du Chiapas (Mexique) où un leader charismatique a été capable d'associer à un programme de réformes locales un slogan inhabituel: «*Conduisons-nous de manière disciplinée!*». Par ce mot d'ordre, Marcos a fait voler en éclats les revendications économiques en faveur d'un accord de libre-échange international et créé un courant critique de masse qui s'est transformé en une opposition démocratique nationale. Grâce à son insistance sur les valeurs sociales, le mouvement zapatiste a contesté des droits acquis injustes, gagné à ces idées d'autres parties du pays et touché d'autres classes sociales. Des cas similaires de mouvements populaires militant en faveur de structures démocratiques peuvent être observés en Indonésie, en Afrique du Sud et au Mozambique. Un de ces mouvements pionniers a été le Bhoomi Sena au Maharashtra, en Inde.

Reconnaissance la culture

La lutte des peuples pour la défense et la reconnaissance culturelles est un autre symbole éloquent de l'occupation de l'espace face au processus mondial de destruction. Ce qui est recherché ici est l'affirmation d'une identité collective et la définition alternative d'une «qualité de vie» permettant de devenir acteur (Gustavo Esteva et Madhu Suri Prakash: *From global thinking to local thinking*, in Rahnema and Bawtree, 1997). L'exemple des jeunes Aborigènes australiens est passionnant de ce point de vue: ils se sont servis de la musique pour combattre l'exploitation et l'alcoolisme propagés par la vie urbaine. Il ont ainsi reconquis leur dignité d'êtres humains. En combinant des rythmes de rock et de chants avec les instruments de leurs ancêtres, ces jeunes ont produit une musique très originale couronnée de prix nationaux et internationaux.

Le rôle des éducateurs est important dans le domaine culturel. Bien motivés, ils sont porteurs de messages innovants. Dans les pays du Sud, leurs actions s'inspirent de trois idées forces: tout d'abord la prise de conscience des réalités sociales (cette idée a vu le jour au Brésil); ensuite, la pratique visant à mettre en relation l'école avec les communautés locales (origine: Australie); enfin, la formation des enseignants et des chercheurs (origine: Angleterre). Ce trépied intellectuel a été extrêmement efficace dans le Sud en dépit de pertes humaines dues à la répression et l'action paramilitaire. Aujourd'hui, quelques-uns de nos plus grands mouvements sociaux sont formés par ces enseignants. Mais on attend encore beaucoup plus d'eux en termes d'imagination et d'innovation sociale.

Pour combler le vide provoqué par l'angoisse et l'incertitude actuelles, le rôle mobilisateur de la foi est largement reconnu. Les résultats sont différents selon que l'on prend en considération les communautés chrétiennes de base au Brésil, en Haïti et aux Philippines ou la spiritualité passive des sectes évangéliques. Les bouddhistes sont perçus comme ayant à la fois des comportements traditionnels et combatifs vis-à-vis des mouvements populaires. Les religions musulmanes et africaines de même. Des figures culturelles et politiques comme le Père Camilo Torres et Dom Helder Camara sont toujours vivantes dans les mémoires à cause de leurs choix en faveur des pauvres, et ce en dépit des sanctions papales. Sans doute le poids du religieux dans l'élaboration du phénomène culturel est fondamental car il est le ciment indispensable au changement, comme nous l'avons vu à propos des mouvements populaires. D'où le rôle stratégique que les prêtres et les pasteurs, les «macumberos», les ayatollahs et les chamans peuvent jouer ou jouent dans l'occupation des espaces populaires au sein de processus mondiaux contre les complots capitalistes et néolibéraux.

La Raison et le cœur

Je souhaite qu'à travers la rapide présentation de ces trois types de luttes populaires (territoires et ressources naturelles, pouvoir politique et reconnaissance de la culture) quelques propositions puissent se dégager quant aux mécanismes sociaux internationaux et aux acteurs populaires dans le Sud qui s'emploient à occuper les espaces populaires pour contrebalancer des pratiques destructrices à l'échelle mondiale. Quelques observations pour conclure sont à présent nécessaires.

En premier lieu, on constate que certains aspects de la modernité peuvent ne pas être rejetés en totalité par nos peuples. Des éléments extérieurs et amis peuvent être perçus comme nécessaires pour améliorer certaines situations locales et arrêter des ennemis communes tels que les entreprises nucléaires, les projets de barrages et l'utilisation des pesticides. On constate aussi un processus de rapprochement entre le nouveau et le traditionnel. Ce processus est aujourd'hui appelé «métissage» mais il n'est pas nouveau puisqu'il est une partie constitutive de l'art de se défendre au plan local qui remonte à l'ère des premières invasions européennes. C'est une des explications de l'étonnante survivance de nos cultures mises à mal durant des siècles. Aujourd'hui, cela est confirmé, par exemple, par la simple adoption d'une caméra vidéo par les Kayapos du Brésil, une tribu amazonienne qui a réussi à établir des liens puissants à travers le monde pour la sauvegarde de la biodiversité et de l'environnement menacé par les compagnies aurifères.

L'usage largement répandu des réseaux d'information électronique dans le Sud, qui recouvre une grande variété d'activités, démontre aussi l'ouverture à certaines nouveautés techniques et une certaine capacité à les intégrer. Les liens et les appuis internationaux se sont

avérés positifs pour les luttes locales, comme le prouve celle qui concerne le projet de barrage sur la Narmada en Inde.

Deuxièmement, les concepts ambigus de «modernité» et de «développement» (même accompagnés des adjectifs «soutenable», «participatif», «intégral») doivent être débarrassés et purgés de leurs connotations idéologiques négatives qui les rendent étrangères aux peuples du Sud et les aliènent. On devrait se méfier de la reprise aveugle d'idées erronées qui émanent d'institutions et de pratiques de pays développés, d'experts ou d'hommes miracles issus de prestigieuses universités. Les résistances populaires qu'on rencontre dans le Sud résultent souvent de la prise de conscience au niveau local de ces pratiques aberrantes. A présent, nous voyons mieux comment les traiter et responsabiliser les populations au moyen de techniques participatives d'action-recherche. Mais il existe aussi un risque d'adoption, par les agences et les gouvernements des pays dominants, du concept de «participation». Leurs objectifs sont clairs. Par exemple, (mettons à part la question de l'adoption de nos idées), *«pourquoi les technologies de pointe actuelles ne sont-elles pas adoptées immédiatement et dans leur intégralité pour résoudre les problèmes graves qui découlent de l'utilisation actuelle de l'énergie et qui causent tant de ravages? Il appartient aux gouvernements d'apporter des réponses»* (Fals Borda, *People participation: challenges ahead*, 1998).

Troisièmement, le succès du métissage, fort heureusement, n'affecte pas les conceptions traditionnelles qui prévalent au Sud en matière de cosmologie, d'imagerie et de mythologie. La magie et le mythe sont toujours vivaces comme le prouvent les pratiques des chamans lorsqu'ils viennent en aide, par exemple, à ceux qui tentent de récupérer des terres. Autant de manières de penser et d'être que des chercheurs ou des militants occidentaux bornés omettent souvent de prendre en compte. En bref, ces éléments affectifs représentent une force anti-hégémonique qui contrebalance la raison instrumentale importée par les agences internationales telles que les Etats ou les églises et la science technologique.

Dans ce contexte, les meilleures voies de réussite pour l'occupation des espaces populaires au Sud semblent être celles qui transforment les actes culturels en actions politiques et économiques. La culture est un excellent ressort pour surmonter le syndrome actuel de l'incertitude mondiale, particulièrement au Sud. Les expressions culturelles spécifiques ou locales ont toujours la capacité de résister et de renverser les axiomes du capitalisme et de la modernité. Tout comme d'évaluer les besoins et les opportunités économiques bien au-delà de la notion de profit et du principe de marché.

D'autres conclusions émanant du 8ème Congrès mondial d'action et de recherche participative de Carthagène sont particulièrement pertinentes. L'une d'elles souligne qu'*«en dépit des lourdes agressions de la mondialisation on découvre au niveau local des réserves de sociabilité et de solidarité collectives qui dénotent une capacité de résistance dans les communautés*

de base, les villages, les hameaux et les bidonvilles». Il s'agit là d'un signe positif. Les études présentées au congrès tendaient à faire apparaître des pistes d'action en trois directions différentes au moins:

1. en reconnaissant le rôle du savoir au sein de la lutte populaire
2. en agissant de telle façon que le travail du chercheur et du militant s'oriente vers l'humanisation et l'intégration
3. en donnant un sens à l'engagement personnel qui combine logique de l'action et logique de la recherche.

En bref, il a été ressenti le besoin urgent de faire renaître partout l'altruisme comme chemin de vie et de construire une nouvelle forme d'ethnogénèse permettant d'accéder à un bonheur plus grand.

Pour ces différentes raisons (celles relevant de l'altruisme et de l'ethnogénèse) le moins que l'on puisse espérer des décideurs capitalistes — au Sud comme au Nord — c'est qu'ils acceptent la pratique du fair-play dans leurs entreprises, dans le partage des richesses, dans le paiement des salaires, dans les conditions de travail, de manière à ce que les espaces populaires concernés ne soient pas chargés de haine, de ressentiment et de violence comme c'est le cas aujourd'hui là où règne une exploitation sauvage. Un sens aigu de la justice et de l'éthique de la part des groupes dominants s'avère indispensable pour créer de meilleures conditions de vie dans le Sud aussi bien qu'un monde meilleur pour toute l'humanité.

Pour conclure, la constance dans la recherche de liberté et de bonheur, ici et là, nécessite moins d'incohérences et bien plus que la simple raison instrumentale. Elle en appelle au coeur autant qu'à l'esprit du riche comme du pauvre. Leurs mains et leurs bras doivent agir de concert pour reconstruire nos sociétés. Tel est l'un des défis vitaux auxquels nous sommes confrontés aujourd'hui dans le Sud. Quelque chose qui, en fait, vous touche aussi au coeur dans l'hémisphère Nord.

(Traduit de l'anglais par François Bellec)

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Christian Mission in the Third Millennium and the Information Superhighway: Challenges for Evangelization

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1. Colonialism and Christian Mission: Examining the Common Ground

The old colonialism disappeared decades ago from most parts of the world. It had a distinctive identity; the colonisers had a face, a language. What began as a commercial enterprise later manifested itself in territorial conquests and political dominance. Presented through the coloured glasses of colonialism, Christian mission appeared to enjoy certain distinct benefits from the era. A more serious and dispassionate analysis over the years tells a different story. It is true that the task of proclaiming the Christian message received certain distinct advantages like patronage and protection, easier access to places and people, and in certain instances, financial support. Those who brought the Gospel message and the colonisers had many things in common: often the missionary and the conqueror travelled together, they spoke the same language, shared common cultural links, had similar physical features, and above all had the same religion, Christianity. These apparent advantages themselves became a source of discredit for the Christian mission. Countries under colonial powers had difficulty in distinguishing the missionary from the conqueror. Christianity came to be identified with the West. For most people it was hard to draw a dividing line between the two.

Today, theologians as well as pastors in countries formerly under colonial control, have begun to raise doubts about the so-called advantages for missionary activity. In many countries the missionary is still considered an outsider, and the term carries derogatory connotations. Such a bias leads people to believe that a missionary is a sort of subversionist, a mercenary, someone who is anti-national. Such prejudice stems

also from ignorance or indoctrination. In some cases, the part is identified with the whole, and the missionary becomes a scapegoat for the segregation and oppression their fellow citizens have inflicted on them.

2. New Forms of Technology, New Forms of Colonialism

Our aim here is not to go into the historical circumstances under which the Gospel was brought to most Asian, African and Latin American countries. Nor are we attempting to assess the merits or demerits of the association between the missionary and the coloniser. Rather, we are concerned here with a new form of colonialism ushered in by scientific and technological advancement. We speak of the information superhighway marked by cable television, home computers, Internet and a host of global networking systems that have revolutionised life and relationships. Sometimes we hear evangelization enthusiasts harangue on how St Paul, the greatest missionary to the Gentiles, or St Francis Xavier, the apostle of the East, had they lived today, would preach the Gospel to millions across the globe by means of mass media. Whether such a possibility could have enabled them or others like them to evangelize the world by networking with computers or via cable television is, to my mind, a mere academic question.

It would be more realistic to look at the mass media today from the perspective of one concerned with the mission to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ at the threshold of the Third Millennium. The task becomes more pertinent when one realises that the world is currently going through a new form of colonialism: a colonialism of the mass media. One distinctive feature of the present day colonialism, unlike that of the

past, is that it has no face, no name, sometimes not even a clearly defined nationality. Its culture and language are stereotyped to portray a super-culture and language. The ritual, the symbols, the high priests of the new colonialism appear to have such a universal visage and an equally global appeal that people easily get allured by it.

3. The Myth of the “Global Village” and Cultural Invasion

The information superhighway has at its fingertips a technology that has to some extent helped transcend time and space. The world was supposed to have become a ‘global village’ as a result of such information revolution, but it does not appear to have become one despite claims to the contrary. Critics of mass media today strongly suspect contemporary mass media’s ability to bond the world into a global village. Instead, they fear the advent of a new form of invasion in which the identities of ethnic communities and cultures will be bulldozed to make way for a single, uniform, dominant culture that does not admit diversity just because it is not commercially rewarding. Mass media is currently playing an irreversible role as a great leveller of cultures.

The Uruguayan author Eduardo Galeano, commenting on the dominant American culture in relation to the indigenous peoples, writes: “the dominant culture acknowledges Indians as objects of study, but denies them as subjects of history; the Indians have folklore, not culture; they practice superstitions, not religions; they speak dialects not language; they make handicrafts not art” (Eduardo Galeano, “The Blue Tiger and the Promised Land”, Rome: IDOC International, 3/91 as quoted in Carlos A. Valle: *Challenges of Communication*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1995, 5). Such distinctions are aimed at steepening the inferiority of ethnic cultures and peoples.

4. Ethnic Aspirations and Search for Identity: Contrasting Approaches, Confusing Images

Indigenous tribes and ethnic groups across the world are going through a phase of transition. They are in the process of a passionate search for identity, political autonomy and freedom, they want to assert their values and worldviews, to resist the forces that are trying to act as levellers. This process is not always well articulated, not always expressed in ways tenable with the precepts of the Gospel. Instead, one can observe a deep-rooted desire to shake off the shackles of existing structures and systems, sometimes mani-

festing their discontent through violence, insurgency, armed conflicts and what has come to be described as “ethnic cleansing”. Ethnic affiliations and emotions play a more dominant role in determining their thought patterns and action than reason or argument.

But the paradox is that often those who rebel against the system end up becoming themselves very much a part of it. The paradox becomes sharper when we consider the fact that they admire and adopt the very system they wanted to overthrow. The most articulate expressions of modern media — Western dress habits, the English language, Western music and cultural values — are freely adopted. They become new status symbols in one’s search for individual as well as collective cultural upward mobility.

The inexorable sway the dominant cultures exercise on the lifestyle and the worldviews of those who fight them make one wonder whether change is possible. This contradiction is all too obvious among ethnic minorities who, while wanting to articulate their unique cultural values and symbols, adopt the values of the dominant class in an effort to move up the social ladder, to get more global recognition. They have been made to believe that to be individuals of some consequence in the modern world they must wear a particular kind of clothing, use this or that popular brand of cosmetics, ride the most widely advertised (not necessarily the most economic or comfortable) bikes or cars. People must dress, dine, walk or behave in ways dictated by the dominant culture. Interestingly, one advertisement for suiting which carries the picture of a lion has the following caption: *Be Somebody!* The art of persuasion not only supports and even sustains the capital interests of industries, but is itself a multi-million dollar industry. The language of advertisement is bewitching to say the least. Its allurements are irresistible for many. Not to follow suit would imply that you are going to be left behind if not totally left out. As Gregory Baum rightly pointed out: “Mass media do much more than mediate information: they create the categories in which we perceive the world” (Gregory Baum, “The Church and the Mass Media”, *Concilium*, Vol., 1993, 65. *Media Development*, 2, 1994, 46-47). Together with luxuries they sell lifestyles and a set of values and worldviews as well.

5. Who pulls the Strings of the Multi-Million Dollar Mass Media Industry?

Who pulls the strings of the mass media industry? It is not easy to answer this question. One must look at the power of mass media which controls the

information superhighway. It is indeed mind-boggling! Media today are a multi-million dollar industry controlled by large corporate multinationals and individuals. They are not only economically the most lucrative from the point of view of profit, but have strong political ideology and act as powerful forces controlling the world today.

Take for instance the way the world's leading news agencies collect and distribute information. News about events in the developing world passes through these agencies situated in the West before it reaches various countries of the world. The agencies claim that news needs "to be edited". In fact, the process acts as a filter through which news undergoes careful selection, receives new emphasis, issues change perspective. Often violence, human misery and poverty get disproportionately highlighted. Events are considered newsworthy only if they have characteristics like impact, prominence, conflict, proximity, timeliness, and the event itself is unusual. Reporters are to have a "nose for news". Sensationalism is most welcome. In the newsroom the news is "treated" to suit the needs of the potential buyers. The stories must suit the canons of the global economy giant! News must be "marketable", "saleable". Unfortunately sometimes, even Church news agencies tend to adopt these precepts of the secular press to stay afloat and not to lose their customers.

Now think of the colonial practice of taking raw materials to their home countries to manufacture products that were resold at exorbitant prices back in the countries which produced the raw materials. The *Swadeshi* movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi in India to reject British products was aimed at challenging this unjust system. Today the phenomenon has come in a new, and probably a more disguised way in the media market. The raw materials for the news stories originating in the developing world are carried over to the West and processed and sold back. George Gerbner's study on the treatment of news from Latin America, re-routed after it passed through the Western news agencies, showed that the news marketed in the West after being "treated" had a far greater percentage of violence in its content than the same news used at home. News writers and editors know that conflict has a prominent news value. Reports on wars, battles, ethnic conflicts make absorbing reading. Even sports reports resemble closely the language of war.

Information is a highly priced commodity. The language of media is itself one of domination. For this reason, we cannot proclaim the Gospel in that language without making the Gospel itself appear to be a

message of domination.

The communication media today are in the hands of a few who control their distribution. The gap between the information rich and the information poor keeps widening. The Sixth MacBride Round Table on Communication held in Honolulu, Hawaii, recognised that the lives, languages and cultures of indigenous peoples are at great risk of extinction amidst today's revolution in communication technologies (Peter G. Horsfield, *Religious Television, the American Experience*, New York, London: Longman, 1984, 7-8). The Churches need to be in an ongoing dialogue with the cultures and languages of the indigenous people, and resist the temptation to wean them away into the dominant cultures and languages. The Church's task should be directed towards integrating them, not widening the existing gap.

6. Church's Attitude to Mass Media: How Tenable is the Gospel *vis-à-vis* the Mass Media?

All this does not suggest that the Church should look at the modern mass media with downright suspicion and extreme caution, and consider media as a monster untenable with the precepts of the Gospel. Enthusiasts who jumped onto the bandwagon of mass media which moved along the superhighway hoped they would be able to do a far better job than St Paul or St Francis Xavier in preaching the Gospel and winning the world for Christ. The phenomenon is referred to as "the Electronic Church". That kind of enthusiasm is no longer widespread today. Such electronic optimism about evangelizing the world quickly reminds me of Jesus' parable of the sower: (cf. Mk 4:3-8). I would like to think that the seeds that fell on the rocky ground or beside the path, in some way, depict the Word proclaimed through the electronic media of the information superhighway.

To swing towards the opposite extreme would be equally fallacious. The Churches today should not develop a kind of paranoia or phobia about the mass media. After all virtue lies in the middle. Malcolm Muggeridge, a leading name in the British print and electronic media, warned of the eventual fall of the Western civilisation much like that of the Roman Empire. Muggeridge blamed the media, particularly television, for most, if not all, of what he looked upon as a slide towards perdition. About his own association with the media, Muggeridge said he was like "a piano player in a brothel who, from time to time, is able to play 'Abide with me' for the edification of the patrons". Muggeridge, who was profoundly influenced by the life and work of Mother Teresa, became a

Catholic a few years before his death. He was one of the strongest critics of contemporary mass media.

7. Mass Media and Religion: A Few Success Stories

When we trace the history of the evangelization of the world it becomes at once obvious that the missionary, concerned with proclaiming the Gospel, did not hesitate to use whatever media was available: film strips, magic lanterns, print materials: pictures, tracts and books, Bibles and Bible stories, visual charts: Fulton J. Sheen, the renowned American Bishop, author and television personality, used media effectively to reach millions. His radio broadcasts were so popular he came to be known as “the angel of the airwaves”. Sheen did not have to buy air time or prime spots on the television as religious leaders are compelled to do today. Instead, he was paid \$ 26,000 each week for his television show. Sheen spent about 30 hours each week preparing for the telecast. Many bars tuned their television sets to his programme; taxi drivers would stop work for half-hour in order to watch. Mothers could get kids scurrying to watch T.V. by saying Bishop Sheen was coming on the television. Such was his popularity. In our own day the media continues to be keenly interested in religious leaders like, Mother Angelica, whose Eternal Word Television Network Inc. is the first Catholic Cable Television Network in America, Mother Teresa, Pope John Paul II, Billy Graham or the Dalai Lama.

One can confidently say that there is no danger of wearing off the mass appeal of religious programmes on the modern day electronic or print media. The popularity of television programmes and radio broadcasts with religion as the main content has continued to capture popular imagination. In India, for instance, the teleserials *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* had profound mass appeal. So powerfully did these celluloid versions of the popular Hindu epics appeal to the masses that some of the stars were voted to power in the country’s political elections. The Hindu dominated Bharatiya Janata Party catapulted to the national political mainstream riding on the wave of such “electronically generated” opportunity. In some instances, Catholic pastors had to reschedule Mass timings to enable people to view the serials which were telecast on Sundays. I once witnessed in New Delhi, India’s capital, a devout Hindu woman replay recorded portions of the *Ramayana* while she performed Puja (devotion).

The teleserial on the stories of the *Bible ki Kahaniyaan* produced to capture the imagination of

the masses, too, did whip up lots of hope for the vast masses irrespective of the religion it represented. If the serial failed to meet with the success it was expected to, it was largely due to the fact that it was embroiled in other contentious issues than lack of viewership. Such was the impact also of films of yesteryears like *Daya Sagar* (Ocean of Mercy) a film on Christ, originally produced in Telegu and subsequently dubbed into several languages.

The new information superhighway has not taken away or replaced religion’s mass appeal. Similarly the impact of media on the masses continues to grow. There is no sign of decline. One reason for this, I believe, is due to the fact that the benefits of the electronically engineered information highway is largely a “highway phenomenon” remaining confined to the urban centres. Even these centres are carefully handpicked to ensure that it is capable of boosting profits. The missionary whose primary task is to evangelize the rural poor may have reason to be optimistic as long as his / her audience remains largely unreached and unaffected by the onslaught of media invasion. To that extent they will continue to be receptive to the message offered through whatever media the evangelizer has at his / her command.

8. Challenges before the Contemporary Evangelizer

But the evangelizer has reason to be concerned with another phenomenon, namely, the alarming rate of urbanization which is more conspicuous in developing countries. The city offers many possibilities: from mere survival to making a fortune. Many of the so-called rags to riches stories have an urban setting. Now the one concerned with the proclamation of the Gospel message in an urban setting has to cope with many voices competing for attention. He or she has to address an audience which is culturally uprooted or not properly attuned to his or her message. He / she has to fight the concept of time where time is money, and one is less willing to invest it on some values that do not have proximate goals.

Yet another characteristic of urban life is speed. The sense of urgency to cope with speed is evident in the advertisements on the electronic media. Prime time advertisers have to dole out whopping sums to advertise their products. On the electronic media often the advertisements are far too many and they come and go so fast that the audience is too baffled even to know what product a particular advertisement was trying to promote. Such a sense of urgency is seen not only in electronic advertising. As I look out of the bedroom

window I catch glimpses of a flyover with several huge hoardings on either side. But what surprised me recently was the discovery that while the hoardings remain unchanged the ads keep changing every fortnight or month — new colours, new figures, new products on sale! From baby food to *pan masala* to chewing gum — there is something for everyone. In Mumbai, India's commercial capital, I was struck by a stranger phenomenon. An entire suburban railway station was draped in riotous colours advertising just one single film. I was told that the railways sell out the advertising rights of an entire station to just one customer for a few weeks at a time.

The evangelizer has to operate from a different perspective altogether. He / she cannot blindly adopt the medium, space, jargon or language of the media world. A missionary would be too naïve to think that after a powerful radio broadcast or television programme, he has successfully accomplished his mission and that people will be queuing up as in the time of John the Baptist to receive baptism. The language of the Gospel may contradict the values the media proclaim. Its creed of well being may be in stark contrast with the beatitudes proclaimed by Jesus.

All this may sound like not too optimistic a warning to the one concerned with proclaiming the message of Christ. But there is reason for hope when one considers the fact that religious places continue to have stampedes, churches and temples and mosques continue to draw large crowds, and religious leaders still enjoy popular favour. The urban people have not become so 'immune' to the religious message. But the evangelizer who wants to reach the urban masses must study his audience, understand their idiom, their lifestyle and struggles. He or she must be willing to contextualize, be willing to change, be challenged.

9. New Millennium and Challenges Ahead

As a new millennium dawns, the information technology may spring new surprises. One need not be a prophet to predict that the 21st century will pose new challenges to the evangelizer. The one who wants to announce the Good News from roof tops will be dismayed to find that the roof tops are too much wired up with cables and dish antennas. One may find all access to the household as well as to the roof tops closed.

Whatever be the challenges the evangelizer faces, he / she must be attuned to understand the signs of the times so as to respond adequately to the new challenges that will confront us more sharply in the dec-

ades to come. Ethnic groups and communities are searching for a new identity. They are beginning to assert their rights and independence. Their ranks include the tribals and the indigenous peoples. Those who have been oppressed for centuries want to break out of their silence, they want to speak up: they are the Dalits and the oppressed classes. The women in a predominantly male dominated Church want a new interpretation of theology, a more gender neutral portrayal of God and faith content. They want not merely greater powers, but deeper involvement in the Church. The youth wants to see the Church and religion more realistic, religious leaders more understanding, less rigid and condemnatory; they want the liturgy to be more dynamic and more life centred, more creative and participatory.

And the evangelizer, like a good farmer, must be in continuous contact with the soil as he ploughs and as he sows. The seeds may be a high yielding variety, but that alone will not ensure a good harvest. I foresee that the most important challenges the one concerned with proclaiming Christ will face is to find fresh ways to ensure that the good seed is not cast about in a haphazard manner. The Good News we have inherited and are invited to proclaim is timeless and too precious to be left to itself. The most significant challenge, therefore, of the evangelizer of the 21st century is to continue the unending quest for discovering newer forms of expression for that timeless message.

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COMING EVENTS

5th symposium of SEDOS for Europe synod 1999

Tuesday, 4 May **FR TOMÁS HALÍK**, Czech Republic
Catholic Academy of Prague

Christian Experience in Central and Eastern Europe during the First Decade after Communism

DR IRENA EGLE LAUMENSKAITE, Vilnius, Lithuania
Professor at the Centre for Religious Studies, Vilnius University

The Mission of the Church in the Changing Society of Eastern Europe — New Roles for Women

FR BERNARDO ANTONINI, St Petersburg, Russia
Rector of the Major Seminary of St Petersburg

Church in Russia today — Difficulties and Hopes

SPECIAL SEDOS ARICCIA SEMINAR 1999

Ariccìa, 18-22 May

DR KONRAD RAISER, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches,

1. *'..that the World May Believe'. The Missionary Vocation as the Necessary Horizon for Ecumenism*
2. *Opening Space for a Culture of Dialogue and Solidarity – The Missionary Objectives of the WCC in an Age of Globalization and Religious Plurality*

SR DONNA GEERNAERT, SC, Canada

3. *Harare and Beyond: New Possibilities for Catholic Participation in the Council of Churches*
4. *Ecumenism and Mission: A Case Study Approach*

FR CLODOVIS BOFF, OSM, Brazil

5. *La Chiesa Cattolica e le nuove Chiese in America Latina*
6. *La ricerca di Giustizia e Solidarietà in America Latina — Punto di incontro per le Chiese*

WORKING GROUPS

Tuesday,	27 April	World Debt	15:30 hrs at SEDOS
Wednesday,	28 April	China Group	15:30 hrs at SEDOS
Thursday,	29 April	Mission in Conflict	15:30 hrs at SEDOS
27 May / 11 June		Mission in Conflict	15:30 hrs at SEDOS