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Ariccia '99 — Message from a Group

DISMANTLE THE WALLS

FREE US FROM RIGIDITY
CLEANSE US OF JUDGEMENTALISM
SAVE US FROM PREJUDICE
KEEP US FROM SEPARATENESS
PROTECT US FROM DIVISION

BREAK DOWN THE BARRIERS

LIBERATE US FROM IGNORANCE
DELIVER US FROM CLOSED MINDS AND HEARTS
REDEEM US FROM FEAR
STRIP US OF INTOLERANCE

UNLOCK THE GATES

PRESERVE US FROM THE REFUSAL TO SEARCH FOR TRUTH
SHIELD US FROM INDIFFERENCE AND APATHY
GUARD US AGAINST SELF-SUFFICIENCY

CREATE THE SPACE FOR MISSION

- E** **EQUAL BUT DIFFERENT**
- C** **COMMON WITNESS**
- U** **UNITY NOT UNIFORMITY**
- M** **MISSION IN SOLIDARITY**
- E** **EVANGELISM**
- N** **NON-JUDGEMENTAL DIALOGUE**
- I** **INCULTURATION**
- S** **SPIRIT-FILLED SPACE**
- M** **MYSTERY OF GOD**

On the beach, shells of crabs lie washed up by waves. Some are from crabs that died. Others are simply discarded, a dwelling too small for its growing occupant. That's how crabs grow — when their shells get too tight, they split the shell open and grow a new one.

We've never talked with a crab. But we imagine the process of splitting open a shell must be painful. Until they grow a new shell they feel terribly defenceless and vulnerable, because that's how we humans feel when we crack open our protective shells!

Like a crab, the longer that shell has been growing around us, the harder it is to break open, to start again, the more painful the breaking becomes. Some of our shells we have worn for generations. Our Christian faith can be a shell handed down by our ancestors. It can become a prison: shells so encrusted with the barnacles of the past, so burdened with trailing weeds, so constricting, that we can no longer move when God calls.

To avoid pain we may prefer to stay locked into shells that no longer fit very well, rather than risk the vulnerability of cracking them open. But when a crab's shell becomes too thick, too protective, too tough to crack open and start again, then the crab can't grow any more. That's when it dies.

And so do we.

Hopefully, this week we have been given the encouragement to grow together.

SEDOS Residential Seminar 1999 — Our Resource Persons

Konrad Raiser — WCC General Secretary

FAMILY

The Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser was born on 25 January 1938 in Magdeburg, Germany. He grew up in Schwerin, Göttingen, and Bonn-Bad Godesberg.

In March 1967 he married Elisabeth Frein von Weizsäcker. They have four sons: Martin 1967, Ulrich 1970, Simon 1974 and Christoph 1978.

EDUCATION

Following graduation from high school in Tübingen in 1957, Raiser took courses in Protestant theology in Tübingen, Bethel, Heidelberg and Zürich. He received his first degree in Tübingen in February 1963, and was ordained in May 1964. He obtained his Master's degree in theology in 1965.

In 1965-66 he studied sociology and social psychology at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts (USA).

He earned a doctorate in theology in 1970 from the Protestant Theological Faculty in Tübingen (thesis: G.H. Mead's Theory of Interaction and its Significance for Theological Anthropology).

WORK EXPERIENCE

In summer 1957 Raiser worked in a steel mill in Dortmund in a programme organized by the Evangelical Study Department Villigst.

He was assistant pastor in the Evangelical Church in Württemberg from April 1963 to August 1965, with short periods in Berlin (Industrial and Social Chaplaincy) and Stuttgart.

From 1967-69 Raiser was assistant in Practical Theology at the Protestant Theological Faculty in Tübingen.

In 1969 he joined the WCC staff in Geneva as Study Secretary in the Commission on Faith and Order. In 1973 he was appointed Deputy General Secretary with responsibilities from 1979 as Staff Moderator of the Unit on Justice and Service.

From October 1983 to February 1993, Raiser was Professor of Systematic Theology/Ecumenics at the Protestant Theological Faculty of the University of the Ruhr, Bochum, and Director of the Faculty's Ecumenical Institute. Among other academic, church and ecumenical committee assignments during these years, he served on the commission of the German Protestant Kirchentag and as chairman of the editorial board of the quarterly *Ökumenische Rundschau*.

Raiser has participated in many ecumenical consultations, conferences and visits to churches. As a WCC staff member, he was jointly responsible for the programmes of the Nairobi (1975) and Vancouver (1983) Assemblies. He was an advisor and member of the drafting committees at the European Ecumenical Assembly in Basle (1989) and the World Convocation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation in Seoul (1990). He was a delegate of the Evangelical Church in Germany to the WCC Assembly in Canberra in 1991.

Konrad Raiser assumed the leadership of the WCC in January 1993.

BOOKS AND ARTICLES

Raiser is the author of four books: *Identität und Sozialität*, 1971, *Ökumene im Übergang*, 1989 (English translation, *Ecumenism in Transition*, 1991), *Wir stehen noch am Anfang*, 1994, and *To Be the Church*, 1997; and the editor of four others. Since 1970 he has written more than 200 articles and essays on theological and ecumenical subjects, including four entries in the *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* (WCC Publications, 1991), for which he was also a member of the editorial board.

Donna Geernaert, SC

Sister Donna Geernaert holds a Ph.D in Theology from the University of St. Michael's College, Toronto. Her work as a theologian has focussed on several areas, but two of her major emphases have been contemporary Catholic theology and theology of religions.

She is currently on the staff of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB). Her portfolios are Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations, and Issues of Concern to Women.

As the staff person for ecumenism she serves on a number of Canadian Council of Churches committees including its Governing Board and Commission on Faith and Witness of which she is the chairperson. She also serves on a number of Canadian bilateral dialogues including Anglican/Roman Catholic, Lutheran/Roman Catholic, and Roman Catholic/United Church. In interfaith dialogue, she is involved in bilateral dialogues with the Canadian Jewish Congress (Canadian Christian Jewish Consultation) and with representatives of the Council of Muslim Communities in Canada (National Christian Muslim Liaison Committee).

In addition to this national level work, Sister Donna has attended international meetings of the World Council of Churches and the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. In 1992, she was appointed to the Plenary Commission of the WCC Commission on Faith and Order and in this capacity attended the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order held in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, in August 1993, and the plenary assembly in Moshi, Tanzania, in August 1997. She participated in consultations to produce a study guide, *Towards Sharing the One Faith*, and on questions of "episcopate/episcopacy in the ecumenical movement". In addition, she represents the CCCC on the North American Orthodox Roman Catholic Theological Consultation and has been asked to serve as a consultant in the most recent round of dialogues between the Vatican and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

Her other portfolio, women's concerns, includes various responsibilities. She was involved in producing the final text of a study kit on *Women in the Church* and in the recent publication of a booklet of workshops on inclusive language. Contacts are maintained with the Women's Interchurch Council of Canada, and the Coordinating committee for the WCC Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women in Church and Society.

Clodovis Boff, OSM

Nato a Concordia (SC), Brasile, nel 1944. Frate dell'Ordine dei Servi di Maria (OSM). Ordinato presbitero nel 1971 a Sao Paulo. Dottorato in Teologia a Lovanio, Belgio (1976), con la tesi "Teologia e Pratica" sul metodo della Teologia della Liberazione.

Ha lavorato per dieci anni nella formazione di giovani religiosi.

Oggi professore di Teologia Sistemica nell'Istituto Teologico Francescano di Petropolis (RJ) e nella Pontificia Facoltà Teologica "Marianum" a Roma, assistente teologico-pastorale delle Comunità Ecclesiali di Base e della Pastorale Popolare, e coordinatore della Pastorale delle "Favelas" del quartiere di Rio Comprido, Rio de Janeiro, dove vive.

Tra le sue opere: "Come lavorare con i poveri" (1984), "Teologia con i piedi in terra" (1984), "Come fare teologia della liberazione" (con il fratello L. Boff) (1986), "La via della comunione dei beni: la Regola di santo Agostino commentata..." (1988), "Teoria del Metodo Teologico" (1998).

Dr Konrad Raiser, WCC

"... That the World May Believe". The Missionary Vocation as the Necessary Horizon for Ecumenism

Lecture at the SEDOS Seminar, Ariccia, 19 May 1999

I.

Let me begin by expressing my gratitude for your invitation to participate in this year's SEDOS Seminar focusing on ecumenism and mission. I welcome very much the challenge to reflect together with you about these dimensions of our common ecumenical calling. I welcome the challenge also in a personal sense since my own ecumenical socialization has been through the ecumenical discourse about the unity of the Church in the context of Faith and Order and through the participation in ecumenical work in the area of Church and Society, i.e. through the struggles for peace, justice and human rights. The reflection about mission and ecumenism was not an equally strong element in my own earlier ecumenical biography. This changed when I had to teach ecumenics to German students of theology, encountering among them a deep hesitation with regard to the missionary vocation of the Church. The need to respond to this reservation led me to fresh biblical, historical and theological study and reflection, as a result of which I began to understand with increasing clarity that the missionary vocation is indeed the necessary horizon for ecumenism.

This affirmation may seem obvious to you, but my experience of involvement in the ecumenical movement for more than 30 years tells me that the relationship of ecumenism and mission is still an area of controversy and even struggle. Thus the commitment to ecumenism in the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, which is shared by the Orthodox Churches and many Churches in the Protestant tradition, aims first and foremost at re-establishing the unity of the Church in response to the prayer of our Lord: "... that they may all be one...". Ecumenism as the praxis of dialogue between Christians and Churches divided in matters of Faith and Order aims at full and visible communion through

renewal, conversion and reconciliation. This Church-centred understanding of ecumenism often draws a clear line between the ecumenical vocation on the one hand and the missionary concern for the world, which is to hear the good news of the Gospel, on the other. Indeed, it runs the risk of separating the prayer of our Lord for the oneness of those entrusted to him from the ultimate horizon of this prayer, i.e. "... that the world may believe that you have sent me".

At the very end of his Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, Pope John Paul II addresses the question of the relationship between full unity and evangelization. He strongly affirms that the lack of unity among Christians weakens and discredits their missionary witness and thus underlines the close relationship between unity and evangelization. But he also gives evidence of the tension between the two when he writes: "The ecumenical movement in our century ... has been characterized by a missionary outlook. In the verse of John's Gospel which is ecumenism's inspiration and guiding motif — 'that they may all be one ... so that the world may believe that you have sent me' (Jn 17:21) — the phrase *that the world may believe* has been so strongly emphasized that at times we run the risk of forgetting that, in the mind of the Evangelist, unity is above all for the glory of the Father" (n. 98). It was therefore his concern in this Encyclical to establish clearly the primacy of the search for full unity as the centre of ecumenism over against its interpretation in a missionary perspective.

The same tension can be observed when we look at the conflicts between organized ecumenism and the movements and communities of evangelical orientation for whom the call to bring the Gospel to the whole world according to the Great Commission forms the centre of their vocation. They have consistently been critical of the ecumenical movement with its Church-centred concern for Christian unity and its lack of active involvement in promoting mission and

evangelism.

As you know, and here the reference of the Pope to the ecumenical movement in our century is certainly correct, the ecumenical impulse among the Churches of Protestant tradition has emerged from the great outreach through the missionary movement, particularly in the 19th century. Ecumenical cooperation became a necessity in order to defend the integrity of Christian mission over against political and economic interests and in order to avoid a situation where competitive missionary initiatives discredited the whole missionary enterprise. The beginning of the modern ecumenical movement is usually linked with the First World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 which was inspired by the watchword of the Student Volunteer Movement for Mission calling for the *evangelization of the world in this generation*. It is also known that the deliberate decision to exclude divisive doctrinal issues from the agenda of the conference inspired the American Episcopal Bishop Charles Brent to urge his Church to invite all the Churches of Christ for a world conference on Faith and Order. Thus we see that the two thrusts for missionary cooperation and for the unity of the Churches have sprung from the same source.

While the links between these two original streams of the modern ecumenical movement remained and were extended also to the third manifestation, i.e. the movement for Life and Work, the different emphases soon began to develop their own dynamics. The missionary movement had taken shape in voluntary agencies of Christian people who often found themselves at a critical distance from their established Churches, whereas the two other movements brought together representatives of the Churches themselves, calling them to unity and active responsibility for justice and peace. When the ecumenical movement began to take an institutional shape in the middle of the century, the World Council was formed as a Council of Churches with the consequence that the bodies associated with the International Missionary Council initially remained outside this new organizational framework. It was only in 1961, at the Third Assembly of the WCC, that the two separate ecumenical bodies were merged.

This institutional merger of ecumenism and mission was the result of a long process of study and dialogue which led to a re-assessment of the missionary vocation of the Church. Already at its third meeting, the Central Committee of the new World Council of Churches, at Rolle in 1951, adopted a statement on *The Calling of the Church to Mission*

and to Unity. This document, which has largely been forgotten, addresses very succinctly the issues which are at the centre of our reflection today. It begins with a statement of the problem: “The problem of the relation of ‘Church’ and ‘Mission’ has been before the minds of Christians for many decades. The older Churches have only slowly and painfully learned to accept the missionary obligation. The younger Churches are slowly and painfully emerging from the period of tutelage under foreign missions into independence as Churches. The words ‘Church’ and ‘Mission’ still denote in the minds of most Christians two different kinds of institution. Yet we know that these two things cannot rightly be separated” (§ 1). It then goes on to draw attention to a recent confusion of terminology, particularly in the use of the word *ecumenical*. The following “definition” has become a yardstick for all further discussions about the relationship of mission and ecumenism: “It is important to insist that this word (i.e. ecumenical), which comes from the Greek word for the whole inhabited earth, is properly used to describe everything that relates to the whole task of the whole Church to bring the Gospel to the whole world. It therefore covers equally the missionary movement and the movement toward unity, and must not be used to describe the latter in contradistinction to the former. We believe that a real service will be rendered to true thinking on these subjects in the Churches if we so use this word that it covers both Unity and Mission in the context of the whole world ...” (§ 5).

For our further reflection, it is important to quote from this document the sentences stating the biblical basis for the Church’s unity and apostolicity. “The division in our thought and practice between ‘Church’ and ‘Mission’ can be overcome only as we return to Christ himself, in whom the Church has its being and its task, and to a fresh understanding of what he has done, is doing, and will do. God’s eternal purpose is to ‘sum up all things in Christ’. According to this purpose he has reconciled us to himself and to one another through the Cross and has built us together to be a habitation of God in the Spirit. In reconciling us to himself in Christ he has at the same time made us his ambassadors beseeching others to be reconciled to him. He has made us members in the Body of Christ, and that means that we are both members of one another and also committed thereby to partnership in his redeeming mission.... Thus the obligation to take the Gospel to the whole world, and the obligation to draw all Christ’s people together both rest upon Christ’s whole work, and are indissolubly connected. Every attempt to separate these two tasks violates the wholeness of Christ’s ministry to the world. Both of

them are, in the strict sense of the word, essential to the being of the Church and the fulfilment of its function as the Body of Christ" (§ 7 and § 9).

One year later, the meeting of the International Missionary Council at Willingen adopted a statement on the *Missionary Calling of the Church* which marks the turning point in ecumenical reflection on mission. Building on the central notion of the *missio Dei*, the statement challenged the traditional Church-centred view of mission. The Church does not have a mission, but participates in God's mission. "The missionary movement of which we are part has its source in the Triune God himself. Out of the depth of his love for us, the Father sent forth his own beloved Son to reconcile all things to himself, that we and all men might, through the Spirit, be made one in him with the Father in that perfect love which is the very nature of God We who have been chosen in Christ, reconciled to God through him, made members of his Body, sharers in his Spirit, and heirs through hope of his kingdom, are by these very facts committed to full participation in his redeeming mission. There is no participation in Christ without participation in his mission to the world. That by which the Church receives its existence is that by which it is also given its world mission 'as the Father has sent me, even so send I you'". This understanding of mission leads to the affirmation of the Church's solidarity with the world. "The Church's words and works, its whole life of mission, are to be a witness to what God has done, is doing, and will do in Christ. But this word 'witness' cannot possibly mean that the Church stands over against the world, detached from it and regarding it from a position of superior righteousness or security. The Church is in the world, and as the Lord of the Church identified himself wholly with mankind, so must the Church also do. The nearer the Church draws to its Lord, the nearer it draws to the world. Christians do not live in an enclave separated from the world; they are God's people in the world".

In the same year 1952, the Commission on Faith and Order held its third world conference at Lund. In a similar manner as the meeting at Willingen marked a turning point in the ecumenical understanding of mission, so Lund initiated what has been called a *Copernican Revolution* in the understanding of unity. In its word to the Churches, the conference affirms: "We have seen clearly that we can make no real advance towards unity if we only compare our several conceptions of the nature of the Church and the traditions in which they are embodied. But once again it has been proved true that as we seek to draw closer to Christ, we come closer to one another. We need therefore to penetrate behind our divisions to a deeper

and richer understanding of the mystery of the God-given union of Christ with his Church. We need increasingly to realize that the separate histories of our Churches find their full meaning only if seen in the perspective of God's dealing with his *whole* people". It was through these insights that the way was prepared for the final merger of the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches, thus manifesting institutionally the inseparable link between mission and unity, ecumenism and mission. This has enabled the World Council of Churches to transcend an understanding and praxis of ecumenism which was centred around the concerns of the historic Churches in Europe and North America and to open itself to the worldwide dimension of the ecumenical movement, recapturing the original meaning of ecumenical, pointing to the whole inhabited earth as the scope of God's *oikoumene*.

II.

The purpose of this first section was to recall the origins and the theological explication of the specific understanding of ecumenical mission or of the relationship of mission and ecumenism as it has emerged in the ecumenical movement and specifically in the World Council of Churches. The interest here has been to underline the inseparable relationship between mission and unity. At the same time, however, there continue to be signs of tension which point to a deeper dialectic which may be covered up in the effort to hold mission and unity together in the understanding of ecumenism.

In order to understand this dialectic, we need to go back to the decisive turning points in the year 1952. The use of the analogy of the *Copernican Revolution* was not simply rhetorical. The decisive issue for Copernicus was the affirmation that it was not the earth which was the centre of the universe, but that the earth was one of the planets circling around the sun. In the case of the new understanding of mission and unity, the decisive step was to acknowledge that it was not the Church which was the central reference point, but rather God in Christ. The Church was not the origin of mission, but God. Unity was not to be understood as the result of efforts by the Churches, but rather the visible manifestation of what the Church was meant to be according to the will of God, the revelation of its true being, i.e. of the new communion with God and among one another. Neither mission nor unity are ends in themselves. Rather, both point towards the goal of God's action with the world, i.e. the establishment of God's final reign over all of

creation. Therefore mission and unity are not only functionally related to each other as the two movements of sending and gathering, but they belong inseparably together in terms of their goal, their inner purpose. Mission aims at the eschatological gathering of the nations under the rule of God, and the Church in its ecumenical unity is the witness and sign of this promised unity of a renewed humanity.

We see here a qualitative change in the understanding of mission and ecumenism. Mission is oriented towards the eschatological reign of God and ecumenism towards the whole inhabited earth, which remains inhabitable because God, who lives among God's people already now, has promised his final indwelling. The power which energizes the mission of the Church and which elicits the response of faith among those who hear the missionary proclamation is none other than the power which assures the communion of the Church in its dispersion over the whole earth, i.e. the power of the Holy Spirit.

Referring to the power of the Spirit in the context of our reflection on mission and ecumenism in a certain sense is a step beyond the Christocentric basis developed in the statements from Willingen and Lund. To be sure, in both cases there was the intention to root mission and unity in God's Trinitarian action, but in fact the Christocentric orientation of the ecumenical discussion gained the upper hand. As a consequence, both mission and unity were inscribed into the framework of a theology of history which covered up the ambiguities of all historical processes. A Christocentric theology of mission inevitably tends to become exclusive and unable to respond to the challenge of dialogue with other religions. A Christocentric theology of the Church and its unity is always in danger of developing a "triumphalist" conception of the Church as the continuation of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, thus considering the Church as the exclusive mediator of salvation.

Introducing the Holy Spirit into this reflection and thus acknowledging fully the Trinitarian basis has a double consequence. According to the witness of the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is the present manifestation of the new creation, of the kingdom of God; it is the eschatological gift, the first fruit of life in its fullness within human history. But precisely for this reason, the Holy Spirit transcends history. At the same time, the Holy Spirit, in the interpretation of Paul, is the vital energy of the Church as the body of Christ. The many are being gathered together in baptism and the eucharist into the one body through the power of the Holy Spirit. Communion in the

Church is the fruit of the Spirit. The Church, therefore, has its identity in the Spirit through whom God dwells within the community. Fellowship, *koinonia* in the Church, therefore, is not in the first instance a moral or social category, but the visible manifestation of the presence of the Spirit. When we speak of the Church as a prophetic sign or an instrument for the unity of humankind, we do not refer to human effort but again to the working of the Holy Spirit.

This has consequences for the way we relate mission and unity and can help to understand the tension or dialectic we have observed earlier. God's mission embraces both movements, the sending of the Son and the sending of the Holy Spirit. While the two movements are united in God's mission, they are distinct in their manifestation in human history. In sending the Son in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, God becomes part of a particular, concrete, historical reality. Affirming God's incarnation in Christ implies for the mission of the Church that the Gospel must enter into concrete human history in the diversity of cultures and social contexts. The biblical images of the salt, of the leaven and in particular of the grain that has to die in order to bear fruit, point to this essential dimension of Christian mission.

In this sense, the missionary expansion of the Church creates the ecumenical problem. How can the different concrete manifestations of the missionary witness be held together in their communion and unity? Again and again, the process of missionary inculturation has led to the point of separation and even division. The imperial model of unity emphasizes the unity of doctrine and structure. The conciliar model of unity of the early Church was built on trust in the power of the Holy Spirit who works unity among the dispersed members of the body of Christ.

A theology of mission which focuses on God's incarnation in Christ must be challenged and complemented by an emphasis on the other dimension of God's mission, the sending of the Spirit. In the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ was conceived, was baptized and raised from the dead. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God gained victory over the separation of the Cross. As Paul says: "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you" (Rom 8:11). The communion of the diverse incarnations of the Gospel has its basis not in the unity of doctrine or structure, but in the eschatological

power of the Holy Spirit. For the sake of its mission, the Church will always have to risk its visible unity, but at the same time, the Church can live in the confidence that the Spirit of Pentecost will provide the gifts which are necessary for those who witness in many tongues to understand each other. Only an ecumenism which trusts in the power of the Spirit and thus is ready to risk a concrete witness in solidarity with the people of a particular historical and cultural context, will become a sign for the renewal of human community. This is the reason why the apostolicity and the catholicity of the Church, its unity and its holiness, belong together. Therefore, mission and

ecumenism represent two dimensions of the same whole task of the whole Church to bring the Gospel to the whole human person in the whole world.

A missionary Church which understands itself in this horizon need not be afraid of syncretism in the dialogue with people of other faiths nor of being coopted into cooperation with social and political movements which struggle for liberation. Similarly, it need not fear the situation of the small minority nor shy away in the face of conflicts whenever its witness meets with open rejection or persecution. God shapes and maintains the *oikoumene*, the household of the inhabited earth, through the power of the Holy Spirit

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Comme membres d'un groupe œcuménique, nous offrons ce message après trois jours de travail ensemble:

L'unité que nous recherchons n'est pas seulement une nécessité interne, c'est le témoignage à donner pour que le monde croie.

La mission à laquelle nous participons tous, c'est la mission de Dieu. Par cette mission, nous travaillons pour que le Royaume de Dieu soit manifesté. «Plus on s'approchera de Dieu, plus on s'approchera les uns des autres». En fait le projet œcuménique, ce n'est pas tant l'unité que la «communion» à rechercher, à réaliser avec l'aide et sous la mouvance de l'Esprit.

Cette mission se situe dans un contexte de globalisation qui transforme le monde en un système clos et oppressif. Dans ce contexte, comme envoyés par Dieu, attentifs à la présence de l'Esprit et à ce qui se passe au-dehors des frontières de nos églises, ouvrir dans le quotidien des espaces pour une culture de vie dans le dialogue et la solidarité.

Ce sont les plus pauvres qui nous ouvriront les portes. Saurons-nous écouter le travail de l'Esprit à travers eux ?

Nous pensons que le point de référence de nos Eglises c'est le Christ. L'action missionnaire, appuyée par le dialogue sincère et franc, menée dans l'Esprit, doit être basée à la fois sur la Bible et la Doctrine.

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Nous croyons aussi que l'Esprit travaille au coeur de tout être humain, de même que le soleil brille sur toute la planète et que le témoignage de vie inspiré par l'Esprit est un puissant levier pour faire avancer la communion.

Nous pensons que «la vie consacrée» a une place importante à prendre dans l'œcuménisme et l'évangélisation jusqu'aux extrémités du monde.

Nous croyons que la recherche de la communion est un chemin de discernement dans l'Esprit.

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who works and calls forth witnesses even outside the limits of the visible Church.

III.

Mission and ecumenism, in spite of all the affirmations that they cannot be separated, stand in an uneasy relationship. In my theological reflections in the preceding section, I have offered an interpretation of this fact which roots both their relatedness and their dialectical tension in God's trinitarian action. Mission as the proclamation of the Gospel that in Jesus Christ God has entered into our particular human history, is the origin of all the diversities which we see in the Christian community worldwide. New forms of church life, new ways of confessing and living the faith, have emerged as a consequence of Christian mission. The Gospel is meant to enter into the very texture of each culture as a liberating and redeeming power, affirming what is life-sustaining and life-enhancing in each culture, and putting a critical challenge where cultures, histories and social structures become oppressive. Christian mission is not to produce copies and replicas of the sending Church. Culture is the voice that responds to the voice of Christ who only creates originals.

But this very movement of mission, again and again, creates tension. The new languages in which the faith is being confessed are not being understood any more by those who originally brought the message of the Gospel. The more mission becomes incarnate in the diversities of human cultures and increases the diversities in the worldwide body of Christ, the more it raises the question of unity in the one faith, in the one hope, in the one Lord of the Church. Mission therefore creates the ecumenical challenge, and ecumenism in this sense is the response to Christian mission. The challenge of the many who are to be one in the diversity of their gifts, which is present in each local community, is being sharpened and increased through Christian mission. In fact, many, if not most of the divisions within the worldwide Church are a consequence of the failure to maintain the oneness of the faith in view of new Churches having emerged from the process of Christian mission.

The same challenge can and must also be considered from the other side, where the outgoing movement of mission becomes a challenge to the effort to maintain unity, where recognition is being denied to the new ways of being the Church and confessing the faith because they do not conform to the normative criteria of unity. Just as particular

forms of inculturation can become a threat to the unity of the Church, so the imposition of a particular form of doctrinal or canonical unity can become the cause for stifling the dynamics of Christian mission. The missionary vocation is the constant challenge to the tendency of defending and affirming unity as an end in itself. Searching for unity means to be engaged in the constant process of discerning the Spirit so that those telling the story of God's great deeds in different languages can understand one another and can affirm the witness of the other community as being truly inspired by the same Spirit. It is this mutual resonance to each other's witness in the one Spirit which is the manifestation of unity, which constantly looks beyond itself towards the fulfilment of God's promise when God will unite and sum up all things on earth and in heaven in Christ.

What follows from this attempt to root both mission and unity in God's trinitarian action for the praxis of ecumenical mission? Let me conclude by suggesting a few perspectives which reflect different facets of the ecumenical discussion.

1. All Churches, communities and Christian people participate with their respective witness in the one mission of God through the sending of his Son and the Spirit. The addressees, the methods and the concrete forms of expression vary infinitely and can hardly be compared or transferred. And yet, Christian mission has the same origin and the same ultimate goal — the coming of God's reign.

This means that the traditional distinction between mission and evangelism, in the sense that one is addressed to those who have not yet heard the message and the other to those who have already been baptized, can no longer be maintained. God's mission is the same in all countries and on all continents. It continues even where the majority of people are baptized. The movement of Christian mission will only come to its end when God will establish God's reign. Mission therefore is part of the being of the Church and not a specialized task or activity which can be delegated to those who feel the particular call. Mission is the necessary horizon for ecumenism since it continuously challenges us to open up the particular forms of unity which have emerged, preventing Churches from defending their unity as an end in itself.

2. Because missionary witness has to enter into the concrete circumstances of each context and each place, mission is, in the first instance, the task of the local community. Missionary proclamation can reach

its addressees only as the missionary is ready to share the life of the addressees and enter into full solidarity with them. The early Church has maintained the rule that a missionary can work in a given place only with the agreement of the leaders of the existing Christian community. This has become a critical issue in many countries in view of the praxis of many evangelizing movements which engage in mission without respect for the existing Christian community. Each Church must be allowed and encouraged to define itself the ways and priorities of its mission. The Church in China offers an important example of this ancient rule.

3. These two principles — the unity of God's mission and the responsibility of the Church in each place for its own missionary witness — taken together define the framework of missionary partnership. Self-reliance in mission does not exclude the acceptance of assistance from outside. There may be many reasons why a Church or community is in need of assistance in partnership with others. It may be too small, too fragile or find itself under constant pressure and not free to engage in missionary witness. It may also be too adapted to its particular context and therefore not able to address the critical challenge of the Gospel. Sometimes there is need for a Church to be called into question by its partners in order to raise awareness for its missionary priorities. This may be the case for many of the historic Churches in the North. Nevertheless, the principle must remain that the criteria for acceptance or refusal of such assistance and partnership must be determined by the local Church.

4. Most communities which have developed in response to Christian mission have remained dependent on the sending Church for some time. Thus the Orthodox Church in Russia, during the first 500 years of its existence, received its Bishops from the Church of Constantinople. However, the three-self principle, i.e. self-administration, self-support and self-propagation, should be respected in any missionary endeavour. It is a contradiction to the understanding of partnership in mission if a structural dependence of a new community on the sending Church is being maintained indefinitely. However, self-reliance in mission should not be confused with the understanding of autonomy and sovereignty in the political field. The important principle of international law, that no State should interfere in the internal affairs of another State, does not apply to the relationships between Churches in mission. This relationship is characterized by freedom in mutual

relationship. It remains an objective which still has to be fully realized in the worldwide Christian community.

5. An important task which so far has not received sufficient attention is the cooperation of different Churches in the same country in mission and evangelism. Too often, the missionary orientation of particular Churches leads to a competitive struggle in the interest of Church growth. It is here that the critical link between ecumenism and mission comes to the test. The affirmation that all Churches and communities participate in the one mission of God should in fact turn their engagement in common witness into a source of growing unity and mutual understanding. This has been the intention of the famous Lund principle, inviting the Churches to act together in all areas where they are not prevented from cooperation by profound differences of conviction. It is for this reason that in the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the members of the World Council of Churches common witness has become an important impulse in the search for full communion. Common witness can include everything from common Bible translation, through cooperation in the field of *diakonia*, to the joint struggle for the defense of human rights.

Other examples characterizing the spirit and praxis of ecumenical mission could be given. They all manifest that mission and ecumenism are intimately related as they challenge each other. This insight is of crucial importance for ecumenism as we move into the 21st century.

Dr Konrad Raiser, WCC

Opening Space for a Culture of Dialogue and Solidarity

The Missionary Objectives of the WCC in an Age of Globalization and Religious Plurality

Lecture at the SEDOS Seminar, Ariccia, 19 May 1999

I.

In 1982, the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches adopted a statement *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation*. This statement responded to a request of the Fifth Assembly of the WCC in Nairobi (1975) to prepare a policy statement on mission and evangelism for the WCC. A long process of discussion and reflection followed, and the statement finally adopted incorporated the insights gained at the World Mission Conference in Melbourne (1980) under the theme *Your Kingdom Come*. The statement opens with the call to mission and the call to proclamation and witness as basic dimensions of the ecumenical movement. It then presents seven ecumenical convictions which touch the different fields of ecumenical missionary activity.

Ten years later, when preparations began for the most recent Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Salvador de Bahia (1996), attempts were made to update this statement with the expectation that a fresh affirmation should be endorsed by the mission conference. In the course of the ensuing discussion, it became more and more clear that the basic affirmations made in 1982 were still valid, even without an explicit effort at updating. At the same time, however, there was a growing awareness that the context in which the Churches were trying to respond to their missionary vocation had changed and that this continuing process of change was creating new uncertainties and conflicts. It was therefore felt that any new statement or affirmation should be preceded by an effort to analyse the context of mission today and to identify the contemporary trends.

The draft outline for a new statement, which is at present being revised in the light of comments and reactions received at the Eighth Assembly of the WCC in Harare (1998), identifies four contemporary trends, i.e. the process of globalization, the spread of the values of post-modernity, the signs of growing

fragmentation and fundamental changes in the religious field, including the Christian Churches. Most of these changes have been in the making for some time, but it would seem that the historical turning point of the year 1989/90, which led to the collapse of the communist system and the disappearance of the bipolar system of the Cold War, has unleashed a dynamic, the consequences of which we are only beginning to discover. For the purposes of this lecture, I will concentrate on two interrelated trends, i.e. the process of globalization and the manifestation of religious plurality.

I shall begin by looking more closely at the process of globalization. There is no accepted definition of globalization, and even the question since when globalization has begun to manifest itself elicits different responses. In a very general way, globalization refers to the process of increasingly closer integration of societies, economies, political systems, cultures and media of communication into one worldwide framework. The immediate precursors of the present manifestations of globalization have been the formation of multinational business corporations and the transnationalization of economic and financial activity. In that sense, globalization as it has begun to develop after the collapse of the communist bloc and the dismantling of the systems of State socialism, can be interpreted as the extension of the previous systems of transnational business and finance to all parts of the world. Globalization, therefore, is being interpreted as the result of the final victory of global capitalism.

However, this interpretation already reflects to some extent a polemic perspective and does not penetrate far enough into a true understanding of the nature of the historic process which we are witnessing today. At least three specific features should be mentioned which justify the use of the new term *globalization* to characterize the present process as a distinct historical moment. These factors are the growing consciousness of the ecological threats in the sense of human responsibility for preserving the earth

and all forms of life; the electronic revolution which has radically transformed the ways of production, the means of communication and the linkage between financial markets; and finally the end of the Cold War with its political, economic, social, ideological and military bipolarity which has been replaced by a confusing manifestation of plurality.

It is true that the most dynamic and aggressive forms of globalization are represented by the neoliberal strategies of extending the global markets and trying to abolish any regulations on the national or international levels, which interfere with the free play of market forces. The global system of production, trade and finance has become a powerful unifying force which has weakened the sovereignty of nation States as well as the structures of international order which are based on the principle of national sovereignty. By its advocates, this form of globalization is being promoted as the fulfilment of the modern dream of unlimited progress. However, in reality globalization has led to “a growing dichotomy between rich and poor, between global uniformity and local pluriformity — and a merciless attack on the ‘integrity of creation’” (Hoedemaker).

However, globalization is not only an economic, but also a cultural, political, ethical and ecological problem. In particular the electronic revolution, which is a decisive factor for the accelerated process of globalization, has deeply affected the human condition far beyond its economic and financial applications. As Robert Schreier has pointed out, “globalization radically compresses the experience of space and time and thus changes the attachment of people to a particular territory and creates a sense of immediate neighbourhood irrespective of distances. The world is being experienced as a field of forces in constant movement without direction or a firm point of reference. Not only do national and territorial boundaries lose their significance, but the understanding of history based on the linear conception of time is being shattered”.

What this brief analysis has stated in theoretical terms is an increasingly dramatic reality in the form of the constant movement of people as refugees, migrants or displaced persons. Hitherto homogeneous cultural spaces are being opened up and drawn into a seemingly inescapable experience of plurality in all parts of the world. While there is the fear that globalization will lead to the imposition of a unified culture based on the Western values of consumerism, there is also growing evidence of the resistance of local communities defending their own culture or of migrants and indigenous communities trying to recover their cultural values and to mark their distinctive difference from the dominant environment.

In many instances, this reaffirmation of cultural identities over against the forces of globalization is accompanied by a resurgence of religion as manifested in particular by the growth of Muslim fundamentalism. Similar phenomena can be observed in Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and not least in Christianity itself.

It would therefore seem that the accelerated process of globalization and the manifestation of religious plurality or the reaffirmation of religious and cultural identities are intimately related. What is being described as a situation of plurality, is in fact the source of increasingly competitive struggles and even violent conflicts. Religion, contrary to the expectations of the theory of secularization, is returning to the public space. We begin to realize that there is no culture without a religious dimension. The reaffirmation of a particular culture and collective identity of a people very often draws on religious legitimation. Religious loyalties are being mobilized for defending communal interests and thus contribute to the further fragmentation of societies and larger communities. Under the conditions of the global market, religions are also being exposed to the dynamics of competition which leads to a further increase of religious plurality with a great diversity of new religious movements challenging the dominance of traditional religions and their influence on the culture of a given people.

The process of globalization has stimulated a wide-ranging discussion about the foundations and the shape of a new world order which would be able to provide peace and security and promote sustainable development. In particular the United Nations have sponsored a whole series of summit conferences exploring the contours of a new world order. These discussions have shown that controlling the destabilizing and potentially destructive consequences of both globalization and religious plurality is more than a quest for an appropriate political strategy. It raises questions regarding the fundamental moral and ethical norms and values which could hold together an increasingly interdependent world community. The Swiss Catholic theologian Hans Küng has responded to this need with his project of a *global ethic* which draws on a core of ethical affirmations to be found in all the main religious traditions. The 1993 World Parliament of Religions in Chicago has supported this proposal with its *Declaration Toward a Global Ethic*.

On the other hand, there are those who are convinced that there is no way to escape from or to transcend the instabilities of this age of globalization and religious plurality. In particular the American political scientist Samuel Huntington has developed the thesis that the former ideological and political

confrontation of the period of the Cold War will now be replaced by a “clash of civilizations”, i.e. of large cultural groupings which usually have a religious tradition as their integrating centre. While Huntington’s analysis has been challenged both on empirical and theoretical grounds, it serves to underline the fact that in a globalizing world the plurality of religions and cultures is not without conflict and therefore needs conscious attention in the effort to shape a new world order.

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What we have experienced is:

§ *A broader and deeper call to ecumenism: “the whole task of the whole Church to bring the whole Gospel to the whole world”.*

§ *Gratitude for the gift of our differences for all that we receive from other Churches. The word, Sacrament, Social Commitment, sense of transcendence, spontaneity and freedom in the Spirit, new understanding and practice of ministry.*

§ *That we need not so much a new evangelization still less a re-evangelization but rather a fresh encounter with the actual, living, changing realities and cultures of today.*

- § *That is the content of a world styled by the destructive effects of globalization, we are called to open spaces, imagine alternatives, express differences and so create a culture of dialogue, solidarity and compassion.*

§ *That is the content. New forms of being Church are emerging in unexpected places and ways and this calls us to risk being there and to become totally engaged.*

§ *From darkness lead us to light; from fragmentation lead us to communion.*

It is clear that such trends do affect the ecumenical understanding of mission and evangelism. The Harare Assembly of the WCC has invited the Churches to respond to the challenge of globalization. In its analysis, it sees a basic conflict between the vision of globalization, which aims at an *oikoumene* of domination, and the Christian vision of the *oikoumene*, which aims at a sustainable community of life for all. Dialogue and solidarity are the central marks of an alternative culture of life. This vision marks the parameters for the missionary objectives of the WCC at the present time.

II.

How can mission and evangelism contribute to the building of an alternative culture of dialogue and solidarity which can respond to the culture of competition and domination? The call for a new culture of peace and non-violence, of sharing and solidarity, of dialogue and compassion has been pronounced frequently in recent times. The United Nations has even declared the decade from 2001-2010 as an international decade for a *Culture of Peace*. Cultures are the *ensembles* of norms and values, rituals and symbolic representations, rule and habits, by which peoples and communities orient themselves in their world and can make sense of their existence. Cultures are dynamic realities which are being transmitted, maintained and changed in the processes of learning in community from generation to generation. At the same time, cultures interpenetrate one another, creating new cultural forms and changing or reorienting cultural identities. The term *culture* here refers to the need for changing mentalities and habits and for establishing a new system of values and norms which could undergird a more sustainable order of world community.

Ecumenical discussion on mission and evangelism over the last decade has given particular attention to the interaction of Gospel and culture, and especially to the processes of inculturation of the Gospel in the diversity of human cultures. In the course of this discussion, much emphasis has been placed on the need for missionary proclamation to recognize and respect the cultural identity of a given community, affirming that culture is the human voice which responds to the voice of Christ through the Gospel. In the encounter, the Gospel affirms whatever is life-sustaining and enhancing in each given culture, but also challenges cultures where they become oppressive and deny the fullness of life for all. In this encounter, again and again, the Gospel has become a dynamic force transforming a culture in order to open the space for the fullness of life. At the same time, the

discussion has focused on the question how the oneness of the Church can be maintained as it responds in its missionary activity to the diversity of human cultures.

The previous analysis of the dynamics of globalization and religious plurality places this discussion in a new context. It challenges ecumenical reflection about mission and evangelism to consider the manifestations of globalization and religious plurality, not only as a threat to particular cultural and religious identities, which must be resisted, but as a new global cultural context which, in the light of the Gospel, should be analysed, challenged and transformed. It is this critical and transforming dynamic of the Gospel which can become an energizing source of the search for a new culture of dialogue and solidarity.

In formulating the topic for this lecture, I have tried to capture this dynamic of Christian mission in an age of globalization and religious plurality with the phrase “opening space...”. This metaphor responds to one of the essential features of a globalized world, i.e. its closed character. For the first time in human history, the world is being experienced as a closed and inescapably interdependent system. There are no frontiers any more and no empty spaces into which people can move to find safety and a basis for their existence. At the same time, existing boundaries of nation States lose their significance and the forces of globalization open up hitherto protected and relatively homogeneous cultures. All societies are being drawn into the dynamics of the global market with the consequence of increasing fragmentation and marginalization. Those who cannot compete and participate in this closed system are being excluded as expendable.

The powerful advocates of globalization affirm that there is no alternative to this dominant system and some have even gone as far as proclaiming the “end of history” (F. Fukuyama). In fact, the understanding of history is based on the contingent, open-ended character of the future, on the possibility of radical change and the emergence of a new reality. Globalization therefore not only affects the experience of space, but also of time. The globalized system suggests a virtual simultaneity of all contexts, thus denying the value of particular histories and of memory.

It is against this background that the metaphor of “opening space...” takes on its particular meaning. The closed space and the disappearance of history as the sense of both past and future become symbols of death. All life unfolds in a particular space and time. All life needs growth and an ecological space within which it is being sustained. Culture marks the context

of space and time within which a living community can maintain itself. The globalized culture weakens and potentially destroys those living spaces and the horizons of time and history within which distinct cultures have existed. There is no way back into the previous existence of secluded cultural communities. The interaction and interpenetration of cultures has become an inescapable feature of the process of globalization. The central question therefore is how, within this global “field of forces in constant movement without direction or a firm point of reference” (R. Schreiter), spaces for a culture of life for all can be opened up.

I believe that an essential clue can be gained from the meaning of *oikoumene* in the sense of the whole inhabited earth or rather the earth as the inhabitable space created by God for all life to unfold. The term *oikoumene* is derived from the root *oikos*, meaning house or household. Our term *ecology* which is derived from the same root, still points to the fact that all life needs a distinct space in order to sustain itself. This space must be protected and yet open at the same time for those vital interactions with neighbouring life processes to take place. To regard the earth as an inhabitable space expands our understanding of *oikoumene* beyond the concern only for the life of the human community to the vision of an *earth community*, i.e. the sustainable interaction of all life processes. God has created the earth as “good”, as inhabitable and has entrusted the human community with the mandate to care for this delicate web of life.

The biblical vision has its own perspective of global reality, not as a closed system under the domination of the anonymous laws of the market, but as an open space of vulnerable freedom under the promise to be gathered up into communion with God. This final alternative which is being envisaged as the reign of God or as the new creation is the source and reference point for all alternative projects of culture and community.

To speak of the project of “opening space for a culture of dialogue and solidarity” points to an alternative to the present trends of globalization and competitive religious plurality. Over against the culture of domination, solidarity emphasizes the mutual dependency which characterizes the intricate web of life. What is true for life processes among animals, plants and other living organisms is even more true for the sustainability of human community. Solidarity therefore is more than a moral imperative: it points to that basic feature of mutuality in all human cultures which the project for a global ethic has identified in the golden rule. In the situation of competitive and conflictual religious plurality, the emphasis on building a culture of dialogue points to

the need to transform plurality into the relationship of neighbours who have to work out ways of living together. Both dialogue and solidarity are cultural achievements, i.e. manifestations of the human effort to keep the earth inhabitable, to create spaces for sustainable community. A culture of dialogue and solidarity builds on the fact of growing interdependence and thus is not simply an expression of resistance against the process of globalization or a retreat into preserving inherited cultural identities. Rather, it accepts the contemporary reality of intercultural and interreligious encounter and seeks to transform the threatening experience of globalization into the creative challenge to build an earth community where life can grow.

III.

The sub-title of this lecture promises an exposition of “the missionary objectives of the WCC...”. This sub-title was formulated prior to the Eighth Assembly of the WCC at Harare on the assumption that the Assembly would help to clarify the missionary objectives. While important discussions have indeed taken place on the challenges facing the World Council of Churches and the ecumenical movement in terms of mission and evangelism, they have not yet crystallized in a clear and fresh mandate for the period ahead. The report of the Programme Guidelines Committee identifies a number of important areas, like Gospel and cultures, mission and evangelism in secularized contemporary societies, and health and healing as well as the need to follow up and implement many of the suggestions which emerged from the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Salvador de Bahia (1996). A number of areas for mission study and programmatic activity are mentioned, and at the end the report urges that the WCC must directly engage each member Church around questions like: “How do we as Churches engage together in mission and evangelism in the midst of a highly pluralistic world? ... How do we offer together our resources, witness and action for the sake of the world’s very future? ...”. And the Message of the Assembly adds the affirmation: “The mission to which God calls the Church in the service of God’s reign, cannot be separated from the call to be one. In Harare we saw once again the immensity of the mission in which God invites us to share. In this mission we who are reconciled to God through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross are challenged to work for reconciliation and peace with justice among those torn apart by violence and war”.

While the assembly documents themselves do not provide a conclusive answer to the question about the

missionary objectives of the WCC, the draft outline for a new statement on mission and evangelism ends with a section on “mission paradigms for our times”. This section is structured around six imperatives for mission and evangelism. It calls the Churches:

- to participate in God’s mission for fullness of life;
- to life in community;
- to incarnate the Gospel within each culture;
- to witness and dialogue;
- to proclaim the truth of the Gospel;
- to witness in unity.

These six imperatives respond to the trends which have been in the centre of our previous reflection, in particular the dynamic of globalization and religious plurality. The Church is indeed called to participate in God’s mission for fullness of life which means to offer “concrete and alternative paradigms to the consumerist ideology of globalization. To the temptation of domination, it must set limits and use its power to say ‘no more’; to the temptation of possession and ownership, the asceticism of the early Christians who refrained from eating and shared their food and belongings with the needy and dispossessed; to the temptation of power, the prophetic voice; to the temptation of proclaiming a truncated and partial message tailored to the preferences and expectations of people of our time, the accurate and whole message of the Gospel — ‘the whole Church (challenged) to take the whole Gospel to the whole world’”.

This alternative can only be offered and sustained through life in community. “In a situation of pervasive individualism which is affecting the very fabric of human society in general and of Christian community in particular, the Church is called to proclaim God’s will and intention for the world. Created in the image of the triune God... human beings are by nature relational. The relational dimension of human life is a given, ontological reality. Any authentic anthropology, therefore, must be relational and communitarian.... The members of a community are different, have different gifts, functions, strengths and weaknesses.... The community therefore requires diversity and otherness.... The Salvador Conference highlighted the importance that the Gospel places on the different identities that constitute community. Such identities, be they national, cultural, historical or religious, are affirmed by the Gospel so long as they lead in the direction of relationship and communion. Identities which attempt to further their own interests at the expense of others — demonstrated, for example, in xenophobia, ‘ethnic cleansing’, racism, religious intolerance and fanaticism — thus disrupting and destroying the *koinonia*, are denied and refuted by the same Gospel”.

These affirmations about the fullness of life in community naturally lead to reflections about culture and identity. The outline refers to the discussion at Salvador about Gospel and culture when it says: “The Gospel will affirm some aspects of a culture while challenging, critiquing and transforming others. Through such processes, cultures may be transfigured and become bearers of the Gospel. At the same time, cultures nourish, eliminate, enrich and challenge the understanding and articulation of the Gospel. The Gospel challenges aspects of cultures which produce or perpetuate injustice, suppress human rights or hinder a sustainable relationship towards creation. There is now need to go beyond certain inculturation theologies. Cultural and ethnic identity is a gift of God, but it must not be used to reject and oppress other identities. Identity should be defined not in opposition to, in competition with, or in fear of others, but rather as complementary”.

These references to passages from the outline of a new statement on mission and evangelism move in the same direction which has been suggested in this lecture with the formulation “opening space for a culture of dialogue and solidarity”. They use a different language, but they confirm the basic missionary thrust towards building a new culture which can nourish and sustain life in community. The biblical tradition is full of eschatological images which can inspire the missionary witness and praxis of the Churches. Related to our concern about opening spaces for an alternative culture, I am thinking in particular of the image of the heavenly Jerusalem, a city with open walls and without a temple, for it will be the “home of God among mortals” (Rv 21:3). I think also of the vision of a new heaven and a new earth which concludes the Book of Isaiah. This is the vision of a community that offers space, for “they shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat, for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands” (Is 65:21-22).

These visions indeed open space and time for the fullness of life. They suggest that such space must be safe and protected, a symbol of reconciliation and violence overcome. They point to a space that is sacred and can offer sanctuary for those who are lost or excluded, who are without a home or without hope in the future. It must finally be a space which is sustainable in its relationship with the created world, caring for the regeneration of all life. In such a space, a culture of dialogue and solidarity can grow and become the source of energy transforming the dominant culture of globalization and competitive

plurality.

This vision of an alternative culture of human community in church and society may appear utopian, since it stands against the imposition of the values and norms of a globalizing world. It is rooted in the confidence that there is an alternative to the unlimited competition, to growth at any cost instead of sufficiency, to use instead of regeneration, to individualism instead of community. The strength and integrity of the ecumenical movement lie in the worldwide network of relationships which can sustain the intention of the Churches in each place to be truly the Church, to form lively and sustainable communities, to build supportive neighbourhoods, to provide sanctuary and space to those who are lost or excluded. By giving expression to such a vision through their worship and life, their mission and evangelism, the Churches can offer new meaning to those who feel lost or abandoned and anticipate that wholeness which is God’s eschatological promise. With such a vision, the Churches can, by God’s grace, truly become communities of hope in a world in need of firm foundations.

The Message of the Harare Assembly at the end quotes from a statement of this ecumenical vision which had been prepared before the assembly to inspire its reflections. I want to conclude this lecture by repeating a few passages from this Vision Statement:

“We long for the visible oneness of the body of Christ, affirming the gifts of all young and old, women and men, lay and ordained.

“We expect the healing of human community, the wholeness of God’s entire creation.

“We trust in the liberating power of forgiveness, transforming enmity into friendship and breaking the spiral of violence.

“We open ourselves for a culture of dialogue and solidarity, sharing life with strangers and seeking encounter with those of other faiths.

“We journey together as a people with resurrection faith. In the midst of exclusion and despair, we embrace, in joy and hope, the promise of life in all its fullness.

“We journey together as a people of prayer. In the midst of confusion and loss of identity, we discern signs of God’s purpose being fulfilled and expect the coming of God’s reign”.

Sr Donna Geernaert, SC

Councils of Churches: New Possibilities for Catholic Participation?

Introduction

In its 1993 *Directory for the Application of the Principles and Norms of Ecumenism*, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity affirms the significance of Councils of Churches as “among the more permanent structures that are set up for promoting unity and ecumenical cooperation”. Like the World Council of Churches (WCC), many regional and national Councils of Churches describe themselves as “a fellowship of Churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit”.¹ Local, national, regional, and world Councils of Churches are all committed to serving and expressing the one ecumenical movement.

Over the past few years, there has been a significant increase in Roman Catholic membership in national Councils of Churches.² Yet, membership in the WCC is not being actively considered at the moment. This presentation will focus on some of the particular challenges and possibilities raised by Roman Catholic participation in conciliar ecumenism. A review of current forms of collaboration between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC and of recent trends in national Councils of Churches may suggest a framework for reflection on the idea of a “Christian Forum” as proposed at the WCC General Assembly in Harare.

Collaboration between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC

1998 Report of the Joint Working Group

As the most comprehensive and representative body among the many organized expressions of the ecumenical movement, the World Council of Churches has a unique identity. Formed in 1948 with its membership drawn primarily from European and North American Churches, the WCC now includes 339 member Churches from more than 100 countries in all continents and virtually all Christian traditions. Although

it is not a member of the WCC, the Roman Catholic Church maintains regular working relations with the Council. Since 1965, the role of initiating, evaluating, and sustaining collaboration between the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church has been assigned to the Joint Working Group (JWG). Not limited to the administrative aspects of collaboration, the JWG “tries also to discern the will of God in the contemporary situation and to offer its own reflections in studies”.³ An account of JWG activities since the 1991 Canberra Assembly is contained in the committee’s *Seventh Report*, prepared for the WCC’s Eighth General Assembly.

The JWG has been instrumental in facilitating contacts between Roman Catholic agencies and parallel structures at the WCC. In the field of missionary endeavour, for example, collaborative relationships are enhanced through the appointment of a full-time Roman Catholic consultant based in Unit II of WCC staff in Geneva.⁴ Since 1989, four representatives from the International Unions of Superior Generals of Women and of Men have been full members of the WCC’s Conference on World Mission and Evangelism. Between 1995 and 1997, an exchange of visits and a jointly sponsored consultation provided further opportunities for co-operation. Also, 10 official Roman Catholic consultants participated in the 1996 Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, “Called to One Hope — The Gospel in Diverse Cultures”, which was held in Salvador, Brazil.

As a means of supporting and encouraging ecumenical progress, the JWG publishes its own studies on specific topics. Fulfilling a mandate given to it in 1985, the JWG completed its text on “Ecumenical Formation: Ecumenical Reflections and Suggestions” in 1993. A 1996 study document on “The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions” reflects the work of two consultations and includes 10 guidelines for ecumenical dialogue on moral issues. Also published in 1996, “The Challenge of Proselytism and the Calling to Common Witness”, places the problems of civic religious freedom and proselytism within the context

of Church unity and common witness. These three documents are appended to the JWG's *Seventh Report*.

Looking towards the future, the JWG recommends two general priorities for the period 1998-2005: ongoing commitment to a common, integrated vision of the one ecumenical movement, and attention to those tensions which may threaten the movement in its diversity. Specific priorities were identified in terms of: issues affecting *koinonia*, and common concerns facing the WCC and RCC. Issues affecting *koinonia* were named as: 1) the ecclesial consequences of common baptism, 2) the ecumenical role of inter-Church marriages, 3) the practical and ecclesiological implications of membership in councils of Churches, 4) the impact of ecumenical agreements and dialogues on actual church legislation. Four topics were seen as areas of common concern: 1) the establishing of dialogue with conservative Evangelicals and charismatic Pentecostals, 2) the impact of various fundamentalisms on the ecumenical commitment of Churches, 3) the place of women in the Churches, 4) ecumenical education.

Major Faith and Order Studies

Concern for the unity of the Church is basic to the mandate of the Faith and Order Commission. This commission draws some of its members from Churches that do not belong to the WCC and since 1968, 12 Roman Catholic theologians, approved by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, have been full members.⁵ Thus, through Faith and Order, the Roman Catholic Church has direct active participation in the WCC.

While the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order which had taken place in Montreal in 1963 marked the beginning of Roman Catholic involvement in the ecumenical movement, the Fifth World Conference in 1993 benefited from the intervening 30 years of dialogue.⁶ Held in Santiago de Compostela, this Faith and Order event drew participants from every continent and ecclesial tradition. Roman Catholic participation included the PCPCU President Cardinal Cassidy and a 23 member delegation, as well as more than 40 others who were hosts, speakers, younger theologians, coopted staff and consultants. An extensive preparatory process included a series of regional consultations and the development of a draft text, "Towards *Koinonia* in Faith, Life and Witness". The Conference Report examines the nature and meaning of *koinonia* and explores steps towards its manifestation. The message proclaims: "*there is no turning*

back, either from the goal of visible unity or from the single ecumenical movement that unites concern for the unity of the Church and concern for engagement in the struggles of the world".⁷

Following the 1991 Canberra statement on "The Unity of the Church as *Koinonia*: Gift and Calling" and in light of the Churches' responses to the 1982 document on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, the Commission has seen ecclesiology as a major focus of its recent work. Recognizing the common confession of the Apostolic Faith as one of the essential conditions and elements of Christian unity, the Commission initiated a theological programme which resulted in the publication of its text, *Confessing the One Faith* (1990), and an accompanying study guide, *Towards Sharing the One Faith* (1996). The ecclesiology study recommended by the Fifth World Conference has produced a text on *The Nature and Purpose of the Church* (1998) which has been identified as "a stage on the way to a common statement". An instrument for an ecumenical reflection on hermeneutics, *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels* (1998), considers questions of interpretation of Scripture and ecumenical documents, and encourages dialogue across cultures and confessions. The Commission's study *So We Believe, So We Pray* (1995) explores a common ordering of the primary elements of Christian worship and examines ways in which worship already fosters the unity of the Church. In addition, an interdisciplinary study process has been initiated on "Ethnic Identity, National Identity and the Search for the Unity of the Church".

Collaborative reflection between Faith and Order and the WCC's Unit III (Justice, Peace and Creation) has produced three reports. Rønde's *Costly Unity* (1993) stresses the essential connection between the search for the visible unity of the Church and the calling of the Churches to prophetic witness and service. In Tantar's *Costly Commitment* (1995), the relation of Eucharist, covenant and ethical engagement is explored. The Johannesburg report *Costly Obedience* (1997) highlights the ethical implications of Christian worship and asks what the Churches' common ethical reflection and action might mean for the *koinonia* which already exists among them.

Reflections on the WCC's Eighth General Assembly

A Jubilee Assembly

Marking the 50th anniversary of the Council's inauguration, the Harare Assembly was identified as an ecumenical jubilee. Its theme, "Turn to God: Rejoice

in Hope”, invited member Churches to look again at the very foundation of their faith and life, to discern together the promises and challenges of a new century and a new millennium. More than 900 delegates from the 339 Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox member Churches of the WCC, along with more than 3,000 other participants gathered for the event. A delegation of 23 observers led by Bishop Mario Conti of Aberdeen represented the Roman Catholic Church.

With its opening session occurring less than a week before the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, members of the Assembly were

invited to work together with representatives of other religious traditions to identify areas and modes of co-operation in human rights advocacy. Solidarity with the people of Africa, and with oppressed people throughout the world, was a frequently reiterated theme. In this context, there were several references to the social implications of the jubilee tradition and in particular, to the international campaign to forgive the debts of the world’s poorest nations.

Prayer and Bible study were integral to the experience of the Assembly. Each day began with a worship service expressed in a variety of languages, songs

• MENSAJE A TODOS LOS CREYENTES EN DIOS Y EN JESUCRISTO

Vivimos una nueva irrupción de Dios en la historia,
en nuestras iglesias, en nuestras vidas:
en la que nos sentimos llamados a construir el Reino de Dios:

Queremos buscar juntos lo que nos une:
la reconciliación de la Familia Humana dando preferencia
a los pobres y a los pequeños.

Tenemos el deseo de que los pobres sean acogidos como hijas/os y hermanas/os,
que sean respetados y reconocidos en su dignidad,
que se haga un mundo de justicia y de paz.
Que ésta sea la prioridad en nuestras acciones, que sea nuestra misión común.

Vivimos una nueva encarnación en el Espíritu:

será en el acercamiento mutuo, en la aceptación de nuestras realidades diferentes
donde podremos construir un espacio para todos:
EN LA QUE SEA POSIBLE LA COMUNIÓN,
y la misión Dios que nos da será enriquecida, abierta, incluyente e integradora.

No es una tarea fácil
pero en la medida en que nos acerquemos más los unos a los otros,
como los radios que hacen posible la rueda alrededor del eje,
estaremos mas cerca de Cristo,
y será posible responder al sueño de Dios:
caminar hacia la liberación de todos/as,
la reconciliación de todas/os,
pues lo que Dios quiere es
que nos amemos los unos a los otros.

El camino no está hecho,
la unidad en la comunión se traza **paso a paso, verso a verso, golpe a golpe...**
Caminante no hay camino, se hace camino al andar.

and prayers from all over the world. Following the morning services, participants gathered in small groups to explore the biblical readings, themes, and images from the daily worship and to reflect on the programmatic aspects of the Assembly. These smaller gatherings provided a unique opportunity to encounter the diversity of the worldwide Christian community. I was fortunate to lead a group which included a Lutheran bishop from Norway, a social worker from Indonesia, a pastor from South Africa, and a student from Uganda. On most days, there were two choices for evening worship: one service was quiet and repetitive with an opportunity for individuals to voice their own prayers, the other followed a freer and more public pattern of prayer and singing. Confessing their inability to gather around one Eucharistic table, the Assembly participants divided to attend Sunday worship in several of the local churches. While some regretted this decision, others saw it as an expression of honesty before God.

Reviewing the WCC Programme

At the time of its formation, the WCC brought together two earlier movements: *Faith and Order* which focused on the exploration of doctrinal divisions, and *Life and Work* which promoted collaboration on social action. The *International Missionary Council*, representing an even earlier stream of work for Christian unity, joined the WCC in 1961. The *World Council on Christian Education*, with its roots in the 18th century Sunday School movement, became part of the Council in 1971. Aspects of each of these earlier movements are reflected in the Council's four programme units: 1) Unity and Renewal; 2) Churches in Mission — Health, Education, Witness; 3) Justice, Peace and Creation; 4) Sharing and Service.

Through a series of "Hearings", participants had an opportunity to review the work of the programme units and to suggest directions for the future. The hearings process was structured in two phases. In the first phase, each of the programme units provided a written report with an outline of meetings, activities and projects undertaken since the 1991 Canberra Assembly. To encourage free and creative exploration in the process of setting guidelines for the future of the WCC, the second phase of the hearings was organized around six clusters of issues rather than around the programme units. Intended to comprise all the areas in which the Churches have been engaged together through the ecumenical movement, the six clusters were: Justice and Peace, Unity, Moving Together, Education and Learning, Mission and Witness, Solidarity.

At the *Padare*, a local word meaning "meeting place", more than 550 exhibits, performances, and discussions on a vast array of issues and activities were presented by Churches and related organizations. *Padare* offerings were grouped into six streams paralleling the six clusters of issues identified in the second phase of the hearings process. I was involved in giving various panel presentations in the "Unity" stream, particularly with reference to the work of the WCC's Faith and Order Commission. In the "Moving Together" stream, I participated in a workshop on the role of the Roman Catholic Church in the ecumenical movement. For many delegates to the Assembly, the *Padare* was particularly important in allowing for a free exchange of ideas and in developing networks to sustain ecumenical involvement.

One of the most sensitive issues at the Assembly was the question of relationships between the WCC's Orthodox and non-Orthodox member Churches. A structural minority in relation to the overwhelming majority of Protestant Churches in the WCC, the Orthodox Churches are further marginalized by Westernized decision-making processes and approaches to the discussion of such topics as women's ordination, inclusive language, and homosexuality. Without seeking an increase in membership quotas, the Orthodox Churches want to be recognized as one of the two major Christian traditions represented in the Council. The Assembly voted on 12 December to set up a theological commission to look at ways of responding to Orthodox concerns through changes in the "structure, style and ethos" of the WCC.

On 14 December, the Assembly adopted resolutions on global debt, globalization, the status of Jerusalem, child soldiers, and human rights. It also approved a three-page "message", adopted broad policy guidelines and priorities for the next seven years and approved some follow-up processes for the 1988-1998 Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women. In addition, the Assembly approved a motion made from the floor by a delegate from the Mennonite Church in Germany to declare the years 2000 to 2010 as "The Decade to Overcome Violence".

Directions for the Future

In the 50 years since the formation of the WCC, much has changed in the Churches' relations with one another. There is a growing awareness that all Churches, in spite of their divisions, belong to the one family of God. Churches all over the world are linked in various ecumenical partnerships which facilitate dialogue as well as joint action in witness and serv-

ice. Yet, the contemporary world seems increasingly fragmented and new questions are being raised about the future of the ecumenical movement. In this context, the WCC has been engaged for several years in a study of how it can best serve the Churches in their ongoing search for visible unity and common witness.

With a view to developing a text which might serve as an “ecumenical charter” for the 21st century, the WCC’s Central Committee adopted a policy statement, *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC (CUV)*, which outlined a new programme and management structure for the Council and proposed the establishment of a “Forum of Christian Churches and Ecumenical Organisations”. After considerable debate, the Assembly accepted this proposal which could potentially bring to a single ecumenical table nearly all of the main Christian Churches and organizations in the world.

In his Report to the Assembly, WCC General Secretary, Konrad Raiser, stated: “We cannot, after celebrating this jubilee and affirming again that we intend to stay together, simply return home and continue with ecumenical business as usual”. For Dr Raiser, the Assembly’s adoption of the Christian “Forum” idea signals a commitment to change. While the “Forum” has quite explicitly not been suggested as a replacement for the World Council, it is intended to be an open process which could lead eventually to a new configuration of the organized ecumenical movement at the world level.

Commenting on the *CUV* process, Dr Raiser affirms the significance of a common vision which “engages the Churches in the ecumenical movement to make manifest a new quality of their relationships to one another”. He states: “The strength and integrity of the ecumenical movement lie in such a worldwide network of relationships which can sustain the intention of Churches in each place to be truly Church, to form lively and sustainable communities, to build supportive neighbourhoods, to provide sanctuary and space to those who are lost or excluded. By giving expression to such a vision through their worship and life, the Churches can offer new meaning to those who feel lost or abandoned and anticipate that wholeness which is God’s eschatological promise. With such a vision, the Churches can, by God’s grace, truly become communities of hope in a world in need of firm foundations” (WCC Eighth Assembly, Report of the General Secretary).

Roman Catholic Participation in National and Regional Councils of Churches

According to the *Seventh Report* of the Joint Working Group, 55 of the 88 National Councils of Churches around the world include the Roman Catholic Church as a full member. Also, the Roman Catholic Church is a full member of regional Councils of Churches in the Caribbean, the Pacific, and the Middle East. A preparatory paper for the 1993 Consultation of National Councils of Churches on “The NCCs as Servants and Advocates of Unity” comments on this trend. “The fact that there is no uniformity among NCCs leads the Roman Catholic leaders to find a variety of ways of Roman Catholic Church participation in NCCs depending on the local situation. Its increased presence creates new dimensions, new opportunities and new challenges for inter-Church relations between the RCC and other NCC member Churches”. Roman Catholic participation in NCCs “changes the dynamics of ecumenical relations at these levels quite considerably”. Also, “It has been noted that joining a Council of Churches means undertaking serious responsibilities for the Roman Catholic Church”.⁸

In his address to the 1971 First World Consultation on National Christian Councils, Lukas Vischer, then director of Faith and Order, identified three “impasses” in which NCCs found themselves: 1) lack of inclusion, insofar as possible, of all ecumenically engaged Churches and Christians in a specific area; 2) absence of reflection in most NCCs on the differences in theology and practice which divide their member Churches; 3) uneasy relationships with the many movements and unofficial groups involved in peace and justice issues. Addressing the Second World Consultation in October 1986, Dr Thomas Best identified considerable progress since 1971 in the first two “impasses”. Yet, the issue of NCCs’ relations with action movements and unofficial groups “remains the most problematic”. Further, according to Best, “the broadening of council membership, particularly where the Roman Catholic Church has been involved, has led to renewed reflection upon the role of the Council and its relation to its member Churches”.⁹ Workshop discussions at this consultation noted a certain complementarity within a NCC that includes Roman Catholic membership. Specifically, “the Roman Catholic Church as a world communion can inspire the national Council of Churches to be more ecumenical, while the national Churches in the NCC can inspire the Roman Catholic Church to be more locally

oriented".¹⁰

Reflecting on trends in the self-understanding, nature and function of NCCs, the preparatory paper for the 1993 Consultation draws on the experience of the British Council of Churches which was replaced in 1990 by a new structure, the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland (CCBI). The product of a consultative process which lasted several years and included not only Church leadership but also many local Christians, the CCBI may best be described by the concept of "togetherness". In fact, the ecumenical bodies in England, Scotland and Wales actually use the expression "Churches Together" in their name, rather than "Council".

In brief, the consultation process recommended that "the Churches should move from *cooperation with one another to commitment to each other*". This significant shift in emphasis is outlined as follows:

Commitment to each other in the search of the unity Christ prayed for requires that Churches accept for themselves the goal of reaching this unity, that they pursue it and in so doing, help, stimulate and challenge one another. It implies therefore that the goal of unity is indeed at the very heart of the *raison d'être* of the council to which the Churches have chosen to belong. It has other consequences as well. The council is no longer there to do things on behalf of the Churches, but to be the place where Churches do things together, as an exercise in, and a foretaste of the unity to come. Thus cooperation acquires a new quality. Programmes of the council become the joint responsibility of the Churches working together instead of being run by the council as a body that is distinct from the Churches.¹¹

As Churches move in this direction of mutual commitment and joint responsibility, council structures tend to become more decentralized. In addition, this new orientation seems to admit a wider range of Churches. Although experience in both the United Kingdom and New Zealand indicates that some Churches which had been members of the old council have not joined the new body.

At a meeting of the WCC Central Committee held in Johannesburg in January 1994, Rev. John Reardon discussed various aspects of Roman Catholic participation in the CCBI. He began his presentation by linking Roman Catholic membership in the Council to a form of ecumenism which is based on the Churches

themselves. In this model, "the Churches set the priorities and agree to work on them together. The Churches recognise that there is an ecumenical dimension to all their life and work". Unlike the old British Council of Churches which worked through a whole range of ecumenical committees, "now our function is to coordinate the work of the Churches and gradually to find new models of cooperation which capitalise on the strength of the Churches themselves". To take account of the different ways in which the Churches themselves reach decisions, the CCBI decision-making process requires much prior consultation and the shaping of policy to reflect the views the Churches themselves express and hold. While progress in ecumenical cooperation is slower, Reardon states, "the bonus is that the ecumenical endeavour is recognised and owned by all".¹² In spite of the frustrations that have occurred, he maintains that "our experience with full Roman Catholic involvement has been almost entirely positive. It has forced us to take the member Churches far more seriously than otherwise we might have done and it has given us the potential of moving further forward in our ecumenical pilgrimage than the older models of ecumenism could have done".¹³

Among the questions raised by Roman Catholic participation in NCCs is the process for issuing public statements. While it is not unwilling to speak publicly on certain topics, the Roman Catholic Church is also conscious of accountability to a larger confessional body beyond the national level.¹⁴ Further, as the preparatory document for the 1993 consultation suggests, the insistence of Churches on "greater ownership" of a NCC carries the risk that the council will lose "its ecumenical vocation of being a pioneer, a body that is able to take on issues and explore new avenues where the Churches are as yet unwilling to go".¹⁵

With its distinctive self-understanding, the Roman Catholic Church gives careful attention to the limitations of Councils of Churches and specifies that the Bishops in the area served by the Council are responsible for the actual decision to join it.¹⁶ Yet, it is evident that a good many Episcopal Conferences have seen membership in a national Council as a positive means of promoting the search for Christian unity. A pamphlet published in 1985 outlines the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops' reasons for seeking membership in the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC). In brief, the text asserts, membership in a Council of Churches makes the Catholic Church's commitment to ecumenism more clearly visible. While ecumenical cooperation in specific projects can be very

effective, Council membership witnesses specifically to the search for Christian unity. Further, membership provides a forum for sustained study of growth in unity and for dialogue on questions of Gospel and culture, evangelization, and ethical issues as well as on matters which divide the Churches. It gives the Churches a common voice to fulfil the prophetic function of Christian discipleship and enables them to act together more effectively on social justice issues both locally and internationally.

Exploring the Idea of a “Christian Forum”

From a Canadian perspective, the WCC discussion of a Christian “Forum” suggests some reflection on recent changes at the CCC. Over the past number of years, the Council has been revising its *By Laws* and *Constitution* in favour of a more participatory mode of operation. The view is that a Council of Churches should function as a “forum” which will provide an opportunity for “Churches to meet as Churches to decide together on common agenda”. As clarified through discussions of the CCC’s Governing Board, a forum is a clearing house for Churches to exchange views on those issues of fundamental importance to them, to see on what grounds they can cooperate and whether any common action is possible. In brief, this means that the responsibility for the issues resides in the individual member Churches. It is not the Council as council but the Churches that make the presentations. This understanding gives individual Churches the opportunity to align themselves with the presentation or to demur or even opt out.

In describing their new model as a “forum” or “meeting place”, both Councils appear to highlight the importance of creating spaces where a genuine exchange about the challenges facing the ecumenical movement can take place. Participation in a forum requires a willingness to listen to and learn from potential partners. The focus is on building relationships that will sustain an ecumenical commitment “to stay together”, “to grow together in unity”, as affirmed in the WCC Central Committee’s statement of *Our Ecumenical Vision*.

The phrase, “fellowship of Churches”, in the constitutional Basis of both the WCC and the CCC highlights the importance of relationships. In fact, “fellowship” is sometimes used to translate the Greek term *koinonia* which has been central to many recent ecumenical dialogues about the Church and its unity. However, the relationship among Churches in a Council is not yet *koinonia* in a full sense. Various authors have noted that the use of the word “council” in English lacks the clarity of meaning which is expressed

- *The Spirit blows where she wills.
Alleluia!*
- Mission is to promote a way of life based on love and justice.*
- The Spirit blows where she wills.*
- The Spirit speaks through respectful listening to the people and sharing their lives.*
- The Spirit blows where she wills.*
- Common witness in solidarity working against injustice to promote life.*
- The Spirit blows where she wills.*
- *Dialogue builds bridges and creates new solidarities.*
- The Spirit blows where she wills.*
- Ecumenism challenges us to live with open-ended questions.*
- The Spirit blows where she wills.*
- Worshipping together celebrates this dialogue and solidarity.*
- The Spirit blows where she wills.*
- In all this we continually uncover the face of God.*
- The Spirit blows where she wills.*
- The God of Surprises.*
- The Spirit blows where she wills.*

with two different words in many other languages. In French, for example, a representative gathering of an undivided Church is a “concile”, and a provisional fellowship of yet divided Churches is a “conseil”.¹⁷ As a “fellowship of Churches”, a Council is clearly not a Church, not a “concile” for making decisions on behalf of the Church. Yet, the relationship of Churches in a Council is more than simple affiliation. Within the fellowship of a Council, Churches “seek to enter into living contact” with the other members. Sharing the one Baptism and the confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, the member Churches exist in a “real, even though imperfect communion” with one

another.

Through their “fellowship” in a Council, the member Churches seek to fulfill together a “common calling”. The purposes and functions of the WCC are succinctly stated in constitutional revisions adopted at the Harare Assembly: “The primary purpose of the fellowship of Churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity so that the world may believe”.¹⁸ In a paper on “The Mission of Councils of Churches” presented at the 1993 Consultation of NCCs, Jean Tillard maintains that the concept of “service” which has been integral to various definitions of purpose has been radically inadequate. He states: “In fact, *diakonia* belongs to the very *esse* of the Church. It is one of the elements which makes the Church a *koinonia* and weaves the fabric of its existence. *Diakonia* creates the Church before making it visible, and makes the Church visible by creating it”.¹⁹ Since it is God’s work of reconciliation that the Church is called to serve, moreover, it is only in unity that the Church can be itself. Thus, in spite of their divisions, Churches when united in a Council confess and witness together to the living God. Councils of Churches, according to Tillard, have a sacramental basis. They are not simply to be regarded as associations founded on mutual good will but are “the fruit of the Spirit which keeps the Churches in the initial dynamic of Baptism”.²⁰

Over the past number of years, there has been a good deal of discussion about the ecclesiological status of Councils of Churches. Within the framework of an ecclesiology which to date “knows only two states of the Church of God: the state of communion in organic unity and the state of separation or schism”, Jean Tillard suggests that Councils might be seen as “interim expressions of unity”.²¹ “The aim of any genuine Council of Churches”, he states, “is precisely to allow the Churches and ecclesial communities comprising it to provide each other with the means to grow together towards full ecclesial status, each helping the other to acquire what it lacks”. While they do not represent a final stage of unity, Councils do have “an important ecclesiological status. They already express a unity *in via*, making possible ecclesial acts in common which belong to the very essence of the Church of God”.²² Thus, membership in a Council implies serious commitment:

A Council of Churches provides an ecclesial situation in which inherited values and elements

of separated Churches are tested and discerned and in which there is a real though imperfect experience of the future diversity of full conciliar fellowship (*concile*). *Such a council (conseil)* gives a new direction and impetus to the overall life, unity and mission of the Church. Membership ... expresses *a commitment to practise some real measure of mutual recognition and reconciliation of every level of Church life.*

In brief, Councils exist to serve the Churches’ unity. “The experience of unity acquired in the framework of the council does not belong to the council but belongs wholly to the Churches which compose the council. The councils ... will disappear at the moment of unity”.²³

From the above, it seems evident that the CCC’s definition of its functioning as a forum “where Churches meet as Churches to decide together on common agenda” is quite consistent with ongoing discussions of the ecclesiology of Councils of Churches and with developments in several other NCCs. In light of the variety of organizations it intends to admit, however, the concept of a “Christian Forum” as proposed at the Harare Assembly seems to represent something of a departure from this ecumenical reflection and experience. Here, the distinction that is made in Canada between the CCC and the coalitions may be helpful. Where membership in the CCC is limited to Churches, the coalitions may include a wide variety of Churches and affiliated agencies. Yet, both contribute to the ecumenical agenda and both recognize, at least in theory, that their contributions are stronger and more effective when they are made in cooperation with each other. While effective collaboration will strengthen conciliar ecumenism, partnership with other agencies must be carefully spelled out if a Council is not to lose its specificity. It may seem that the Forum concept is the only way of bringing together the multiplicity of Churches at the international level. Still, I think it important to retain the idea of a Council and to explore the specific lessons from the experience of NCCs for a sense of direction. The broad partnership envisioned in the proposed Christian Forum may no longer bring Churches into the kind of relationship that will effect change.

Conclusions

While a Council of Churches needs structures to exist and function, it is important to note that conciliar ecumenism is not just a matter of organization and bureaucracy. A Council of Churches is not only

an instrument but also an expression of the ecumenical movement out of which it has grown. Over several years of discussion with its member Churches and various other partners, the World Council of Churches Central Committee has affirmed the following vision of the ecumenical movement.

We long for the visible oneness of the body of
Christ,
affirming the gifts of all,
young and old, women and men, lay and ordained.

We expect the healing of the human community,
the wholeness of God's entire creation.

We trust in the liberating power of forgiveness,
transforming enmity into friendship
and breaking the spiral of violence.

We open ourselves for a culture of dialogue and
solidarity,
sharing life with strangers
and seeking encounter with those of other faiths.²⁴

Notes

¹“Constitution of the World Council of Churches,” in *Assembly Workbook: Harare 1998* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), p. 121.

²Thomas Best, “The Life and Meaning of NCCs: the Ecclesiological Issues,” in T. Best, ed., *Instruments of Unity – National Councils of Churches within the One Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1988), p. 31, states that Roman Catholic membership in NCCs has increased from 11 in 1971, to 19 in 1975, to 33 in 1986. The preparatory paper for the 1993 consultation on “The NCCs as Servants and Advocates of Unity” reported 41 instances of RC membership in NCCs; in 1998, the *Seventh Report* of the JWG reported 55.

³Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, *Seventh Report* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), p. 25.

⁴At present, the consultant is Sister Elizabeth Moran of the Missionary Sisters of Saint Columban.

⁵Action approved by the WCC's Fourth General Assembly, held in Uppsala.

⁶The conference report reflects the insights of bilateral dialogues, of united and uniting Churches, of the Christian world communions, and of regional and national Councils of Churches.

⁷Thomas F. Best and Gunther Gassmann, eds., *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia*. Faith and Order Paper 166 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994), p. 225.

⁸“Some Major Trends in the Life of NCCs since 1986”, typescript, pp. 6-7.

⁹*Instruments of Unity*, p. 32.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 10. For example, “the Protestant Churches ask the Roman Catholics, ‘Is national pluriformity possible?’ and the Roman Catholics ask the Protestants, ‘Do you realize that you are part of a world Church?’”

¹¹“Some Major Trends in the Life of NCCs since 1986”, p. 1.

¹²John Reardon, “Roman Catholic Involvement in the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland”, typescript, p. 2.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁴See, *Instruments of Unity*, pp. 9-10. “In the Netherlands, for example, where the ethical question of euthanasia has engendered widespread public controversy in the last several years, discussions in the Council of Churches about making a statement were complicated because the Roman Catholic Bishops were bound to authoritative Catholic moral teaching on the issue”.

¹⁵“Some Major Trends in the Life of NCCs since 1986”, p. 2.

¹⁶Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* (Vatican City: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1993), art. 166-171.

¹⁷Aram Keshishian, *Conciliar Fellowship: A Common Goal* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1992), pp. 1-2. See also, Hervé Legrand, “Councils of Churches as Instruments of Unity within the One Ecumenical Movement”, in *Instruments of Unity*, pp. 67-68.

¹⁸*Assembly Workbook*, p. 122.

¹⁹J.M.R. Tillard, “The Mission of Councils of Churches”, typescript, pp. 1-2.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 5.

²¹Presentation given at the 1982 “Consultation on the Significance and Contribution of Councils of Churches in the Ecumenical Movement”. Quoted by T. Best in *Instruments of Unity*, p. 35.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 36.

²³Quoted from the Report of the 1982 Consultation, in *Instruments of Unity*, p. 37.

²⁴*Assembly Workbook*, p. 119.

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Mission and Ecumenism: A Case Study Approach

Introduction

“May they all be one . . . that the world may believe that you sent me” (Jn 17:21). These words from Jesus’ prayer at the last supper define the goal of the ecumenical effort among Christians around the world. Insofar as unity among Jesus’ followers witnesses to the credibility of the Gospel, mission and ecumenism are necessarily linked. Thus, it is not surprising that the 1910 Missionary Conference in Edinburgh is usually identified as the beginning of the 20th century ecumenical movement. In its assertion that the Church is a “kind of sacrament or sign” of the unity of the whole human race (cf. *Lumen gentium*, n. 1), moreover, the Second Vatican Council offers a doctrinal basis for the linking of mission and ecumenism. Yet, the practical implementation of this conciliar teaching continues to challenge reflection and action.

As a means of exploring some of the ways in which ecumenism and mission might be linked, I would like to begin with a review of Catholic perspectives on ecumenism. The presentation will then take a case study approach with a focus on one of the Canadian inter-Church coalitions for social justice. In light of the specific lessons learned from this coalition experience, some more general reflections will be offered.

Catholic Perspectives on Ecumenism

Theological Basis

In the documents of the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church was given a mandate for ecumenism which has been supplemented by authoritative post-conciliar texts including: the *Codes of Canon Law for the Roman and Eastern Catholic Churches* (1983 and 1990), the *Directory for the Application of the Principles and Norms of Ecumenism* (1993), two Apostolic Letters, of Pope John Paul II, on *Preparation for the Jubilee of the Year 2000* (*Tertio millennio adveniente*, 1994) and *Light from the East* (*Orientalis lumen*, 1995), and Pope John Paul II’s Encyclical on *Commitment to Ecumenism* (*Ut unum sint*, 1995). These documents underline the responsibility of the “entire college of Bishops and of the Ap-

ostolic See” to foster ecumenism “which the Church is bound by the will of Christ to promote” (*Canon*, 755.1). In brief, the Catholic Church’s commitment to ecumenism is irrevocable and this commitment has a firm theological foundation.

Catholic principles of ecumenism are based on two premises: the will of Christ and the shared communion of all Christians through Baptism. Since the Church founded by Christ is “one and unique”, the Second Vatican Council’s *Decree on Ecumenism* declares that discord among Christians: “openly contradicts the will of Christ, provides a stumbling block to the world, and inflicts damage on the most holy cause of proclaiming the good news to every creature” (cf. *Unitatis redintegratio*, n. 1). While the Church of God is one, its unity has been ruptured by human folly and sinfulness. But even though divided, Christians are still in communion with one another. Baptized into the one body of Christ, divided Christians share a certain, though imperfect, communion.

Commitment to Christian unity is for the sake of the world. “Ecumenical cooperation shows to the world that those who believe in Christ . . . can set about overcoming human divisions, even about such sensitive matters as religious faith and practice” (*Ecumenical Directory*, n. 205). Conversely, divisions among Christians are a major obstacle to the preaching of the Gospel in the world today. For Pope John Paul II, this is a particular challenge in preparation for the Year 2000. “Among the sins which require a greater commitment to repentance and conversion should certainly be counted those which *have been detrimental to the unity willed by God for his People*.... The approaching end of the second millennium demands of everyone an *examination of conscience* and the promotion of fitting ecumenical initiatives, so that we can celebrate the Great Jubilee, if not completely united, *at least much closer to overcoming the divisions of the second millennium*” (*Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 34).

The call to seek unity is an imperative for all Christians. According to the Second Vatican Council, “Concern for restoring unity involves the whole Church, faithful and clergy alike. It extends to everyone, ac-

ording to the talent of each, whether it be exercised in daily Christian living or in theological and historical studies" (*Unitatis redintegratio*, n. 5). In fact, commitment to ecumenism is a "duty of the Christian conscience enlightened by faith and guided by love" (*Ut unum sint*, n. 8). Thus, "where ecumenical work is not being done, or is not being done effectively", the *Ecumenical Directory* states, "Catholics will seek to promote it" (n. 23).

Prayer, Dialogue, Practical Cooperation

In the documents of the Catholic Church the promotion of Christian unity has three interrelated elements: spiritual means, theological dialogue, practical cooperation and common witness. Each of the three elements builds on the others and aspects of all three are present in each. This suggests a way of testing the authenticity of any particular ecumenical endeavour.

Christian unity is a gift of the Holy Spirit for which all must pray "with ever greater insistence" (*Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 34). Ecumenism reaches into the depths of Christian spirituality. It requires that "change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians" that the Second Vatican Council calls "spiritual ecumenism" and identifies as "the soul of the whole ecumenical movement" (*Unitatis redintegratio*, n. 8). Even when prayer is not specifically offered for Christian unity, it actually becomes an expression and confirmation of unity. Ecumenical prayer is at the service of Christian mission and credibility. Thus, it is not surprising that the *Ecumenical Directory* and the Apostolic Letter on the relations with the Orthodox Churches highlight the special vocation of religious orders and congregations in fostering ecumenical thought and action. "Those who seek holiness will be able to recognize its fruits also outside the visible boundaries of their own Church" (*Directory*, n. 25).

While prayer is the "soul" of ecumenical renewal and of the yearning for unity, it is also the basis and support for theological dialogue. Rooted in today's personalist way of thinking, dialogue is an indispensable step toward the self-realization of human individuals and communities. More than just an exchange of ideas, dialogue is an exchange of gifts. There is a close relationship between dialogue and prayer in that deeper prayer makes dialogue more fruitful and prayer becomes the ever more mature fruit of dialogue. Dialogue may take place in a variety of formal and informal settings including conversations that occur in daily life, sessions for the common examination of Chris-

tian perspectives on issues of concern to particular professional groups, and study groups for specifically ecumenical subjects (*Directory*, n. 174). In Canada, there are formal bilateral dialogues between the Roman Catholic and the Anglican, Lutheran, and United Churches. In addition, the Canadian Council of Churches' Commission on Faith and Witness provides an opportunity for multilateral dialogue. Other occasions for dialogue occur through the presence of ecumenical guests and partners at denominational meetings.

For Christians, ecumenical cooperation is "a clear expression of the bond that unites all the baptized" (*Directory*, n. 211). It is "a true school of ecumenism, a dynamic road to unity" (*Ut unum sint*, n. 40). Echoing the famous question asked by the Third World Conference on Faith and Order (Lund, 1952) as to whether the Churches "should not act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately", the *Directory* affirms that Christians "will want to do everything together that is allowed by their faith" (cf. n. 206). Among the many possible areas for cooperation, the *Directory* lists: "working for a more just society, for peace, for promotion of the rights and dignity of women, and for a more equitable distribution of resources ... joint services for the poor, the sick, the handicapped, the aged and all who suffer because of unjust 'structures of sin' ... the problem of migrants, refugees, and victims of natural catastrophes" (n. 215); collaboration "in such areas as education, public and private morality, social justice, matters connected with culture, learning and the arts" (n. 44, *h*); pastoral care in "schools, hospitals and prisons" (n. 64); joint efforts in the field of medicine and social communications media (nn. 216, 217).

Cooperation in Missionary Activity

Recognizing the divisions that exist among Christians as a major obstacle to the preaching of the Gospel, the *Directory* maintains that "efforts being made to overcome them do much to offset the scandal and to give credibility to Christians who proclaim that Christ is the one in whom all things and people are gathered together into unity". Thus, "the common witness given by all forms of ecumenical cooperation is already missionary" (n. 205). Further, ecumenical cooperation is particularly necessary in the mission to people in the modern world. Specifically, the ability of divided Christians to bear common witness "can be a powerful invitation to a renewed appreciation of Christian faith in a secularized society" (*ibid.*, n. 208). In this context, a number of ecumenical coalitions for

social justice have been active in Canada since the early 1970's.

Whether dealing with human rights, poverty, corporate responsibility or disarmament, the tendency among Canadian Christians over the past 30 years has been to seek ecumenical partners for collaborative research and effective advocacy. At present, various social and religious concerns are located in more than 50 different coalitions. These include: Aboriginal Rights Coalition, Canada-Asia Working Group, Church Council on Justice and Corrections, Ecumenical Coalition on Economic Justice, Interchurch Fund for International Development, Interchurch Coalition on Africa, Interchurch Committee on Human Rights in Latin America, Interchurch Committee on Refugees, Project Ploughshares, Task Force on Churches and Corporate Responsibility. Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and United Churches participate in most of these coalitions. Other Churches, such as the Mennonites, Religious Society of Friends and Salvation Army, participate according to specific interests.

A number of the inter-Church coalitions express their concerns about social issues by responding to government policies and actions with various briefs or statements. Some of these are in the form of an open letter signed by Church leaders as in 1987, on Canada's defence policy. Others take the form of an annual report forwarded to a particular department such as External Affairs, on human rights in Latin America. Still others attempt to challenge legislation which is seen as unjust. Since 1989, for example, the Inter-Church Committee on Refugees has been seeking to amend legislation through court action. Over the past few months, initiatives by various inter-Church coalitions have enabled Church leaders to issue a statement and appear before a House of Commons' Standing Committee to discuss the moral urgency of a global drive to abolish nuclear weapons. Also, letters have been sent to the Federal Government opposing military action in Iraq and Kosovo; urging the government to address the grave and growing problem of domestic poverty, especially of child poverty; and supporting a settlement of Aboriginal land claims for the Lubicon people.

In recent years, new issues have given rise to new partnerships as the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) have collaborated on a number of common concerns. In this context, a number of *ad hoc* committees have worked ecumenically to produce statements, briefs or court interventions on abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia, pornography, and vio-

lence against women. Involvement with the EFC has encouraged contacts between the Roman Catholic Church and some of the smaller Churches which usu-

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Passion

I am on fire with zeal for the mission of God.

Set me on fire with zeal for the mission of God.

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Pain

Pain of Abandonment

Pain of Isolation

Pain of Division

Power

Which can deprive by exclusion

Which can enable and empower by inclusion

Possibilities

Enable us to do something together and to do it very well

Praxis

Courage to face fears/prejudice

Commitment to cross traditional boundaries

And explore God's presence in partnership and solidarity

Patience

In the fullness of time God sent God's Son

Pregnant

As a woman in labour who longs for the birth,

- *I long for you, O God;
and as she is weary to see the face of her child,
so do I seek your deliverance.
She cries out, she pants, because her pain is great,
and her longing is beyond measure,
her whole body is groaning in travail*

ally are not participants in the inter-Church coalitions.

The social justice coalitions provide a means of practical cooperation in missionary activity not only as witnesses to the overcoming of Christian divisions but also as agents of the Churches' mission. Roger Hutchinson, a United Church minister and professor of church and society at Emmanuel College in Toronto, describes an emerging ecumenical model of mission based on the work of David Bosch.¹ Three biblical understandings of mission are central to his approach: Luke's emphasis on solidarity with the poor, Matthew's stress on making disciples and keeping the commandments, Paul's focus on membership in the covenant community. With these biblical models as a framework, Hutchinson maintains that coalition activities can be seen as integral parts of the mission of their sponsoring denominations. He states, "Insofar as the missionary paradigms of Luke and Matthew both stress doing justice in the world, they provide suggestive models for coalition activities in the present".² Further, "His [Paul's] emphasis on the experience of reconciling, sustaining love as the primary motivation for mission is consistent with the view of the coalitions and their sponsoring Churches that the experience of injustice and brutality is a primary motivation for effective action against such evils".³ Thus, through their support for coalition activities, church members are agents of mission and not simply contributors to someone else's good works.

Hutchinson's interpretation of the role of the inter-Church coalitions seems quite consistent with the theology of mission presented in Pope Paul VI's *Evangelii nuntiandi* which affirms:

"For the Church it is a question not only of preaching the Gospel in ever wider geographic areas or to ever greater numbers of people, but also of affecting and as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and plan of salvation" (n. 19).

This Apostolic Exhortation offers a comprehensive description of the mission of the Church in which dedication to the liberation of men and women is a constitutive element (*ibid.*, n. 30). Specifically, evangelizing means "bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new" (*ibid.*, n. 18). Reflecting the Second Vatican Coun-

cil's *Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (Ad gentes)*, mission is seen as a function of the essence of the Church and a task shared by the whole Church.

In light of this integrative view of mission, any of the various ecumenical coalitions for social justice could provide a case study for reflection on relationships between mission and ecumenism. Within the framework of the one mission of the Church, however, different situations give rise to different activities and a specific mission *ad gentes* can still be identified. For the purposes of this presentation, therefore, it seems most appropriate to discuss the formation and mandate of the Aboriginal Rights Coalition, a coalition which reflects the experience of Christian mission to the country's indigenous population.

The Aboriginal Rights Coalition

Missionary Activity in Canada

An educational resource booklet⁴ published by the Aboriginal Rights Coalition in 1995 lists a history of key contacts between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the country now called Canada. The text begins by noting that prior to the arrival of the Europeans, the country was inhabited by numerous Indigenous nations with different dialects of many languages, different cultures and spiritual traditions. In July 1534, Jacques Cartier's contact with the Iroquois Confederacy at Gaspé included a presentation of Christian teaching. After a gap of more than 70 years, Jessé Fléché began missionary work among the Mi'kmaq in 1610. Early relationships between European settlers and the Aboriginal population were characterized by commercial arrangements, inter-marriage, and military alliances. This relationship was formalized in treaties between various European monarchs and Indigenous nations which recognized each other's independence and sovereignty. The Two Row Wampum Treaty of 1613 between the Iroquois and the Dutch expresses this understanding. Specifically, the beads represent the two nations' canoes travelling down the river in parallel; neither going ahead nor cutting the other off from its path.

A period of colonization and treaty-making began with the Royal Proclamation of 1763 which declared: Aboriginal nations had rights to the lands they traditionally occupied; they "should not be molested or disturbed" on their lands without formal treaties being negotiated; only the Crown would have the authority to enter into such agreements on behalf of the settlers. In 1867, the British North America Act gave exclusive jurisdiction over "Indians and lands reserved for

Indians” to the Federal Government of the newly formed Canada. From 1871 to 1921, a series of numbered treaties (#1 – #11) negotiated land surrender of First Nations from Western Ontario through Alberta and the Northwest Territories. In 1876, the first of several versions of the Indian Act was passed. In an attempt to regulate all aspects of life, these Acts required First Nations to receive permission from Indian Agents to travel or engage in trade and prevented First Nations from voting. From the mid-1800’s to the early 1970’s, Residential Schools established by the Federal Government were operated by four major Christian denominations. These schools contributed to the government agenda of assimilation, identified as official policy in the White Paper of 1969. Churches and Aboriginal peoples organized strongly against this Paper and defeated it. By the time the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples released its six-volume report in November 1996, there was a recognition that: “Assimilation policies have done great damage, leaving a legacy of brokenness affecting Aboriginal individuals, families and communities”.⁵

In light of biblical assertions about Jesus Christ as the “one mediator between God and humankind”, (1 Tm 2:4-5) as well as the only name in which salvation is given (Acts 4:12), it is not surprising that many Christians have felt that the Gospel mandate to “make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:18-20) compels them to engage in missionary activity. Yet, as John Webster Grant points out, this sense of compulsion to propagate the faith may remain latent until activated by some external stimulus. Specifically, he maintains that Christian attention was directed to the Indians of Canada by two movements of religious resurgence: 1) the late flowering of the Catholic Reformation in France which inspired the heroic missions of the 17th century, and 2) an impulse beginning with late 17th century German pietism, growing through a series of 18th century evangelical revivals in English-speaking countries, and finally including Roman Catholic reactions to the French revolution, which marked the 19th as the ‘great century’ of Christian missions.⁶ Associated with movements of renewal, missions tended to attract “adherents of ardent versions of Christianity that linked salvation closely with the holding of specific beliefs or the profession of particular forms of religious experience”.⁷ While differing on many fundamental issues, ultramontane Roman Catholics and evangelical Protestants agreed in seeing little value in any but their own form of religion.

Believing in the fundamental unity of the human race and the universality of God’s offer of salvation,

missionaries necessarily held a high view of the spiritual potential of Aboriginal people.⁸ Yet, this theological conviction did not translate into a positive assessment of the actual spiritual state of those they encountered. Aboriginal practices which were seen as either irreligious or idolatrous were to be replaced by commitment to Christ. As they attempted to achieve their desired goal, however, Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries were themselves engaged in a conflict that went much deeper than mere denominational competition, “for each party was convinced that the other was leading the Indians to perdition”.⁹ In an atmosphere of hostility, often exacerbated by international situations such as anti-clericalism in France or Pius IX’s restoration of an English hierarchy, missionaries communicated their suspicions of Protestant heresy or Catholic superstition to Aboriginal converts.¹⁰

At the end of the 19th century, the great majority of Aboriginal people in Canada were at least nominally Christian. By the 1971 census, the total had risen still higher with a smaller proportion of Aboriginal people than those of British origin declaring adherence to “other” or “no” religion.

Of those listed as Christian in 1971 Roman Catholics accounted for 174,000, or somewhat more than half. Anglicans were second with 69,000, a figure that included a large proportion of the Inuit. The United Church, inheriting Methodist and some Presbyterian work, had 32,000. There were 6,000 Pentecostals, representing a remarkable increase in recent years and one that has presumably continued. Baptists and Presbyterians each numbered 4,000.¹¹

This impressive rate of growth involved not mere acceptance but active initiative on the part of Aboriginal people. Zealous converts became effective missionaries to their own people and there were many reports of various communities’ readiness to receive the Christian message.

For the Aboriginal people, Grant argues: “Conversion to Christianity was essentially a phenomenon of the moon of wintertime, when ancestral spirits had ceased to perform their expected functions satisfactorily and angel choirs promised to fill a spiritual vacuum”.¹² Under relentless pressure from a technically superior and militarily more powerful society, traditional values of Aboriginal culture had broken down. Among the factors which contributed to the Indians’ situation of poverty and sense of helplessness, Grant notes: “depletion by fur traders, lumbermen, and settlers of the resources on which their economy had origi-

nally depended; the diseases and demoralizing influences that seemed to be inevitable concomitants of White contact".¹³ In this context, Christianity might well appear to be a movement for revitalization and a source of spiritual power. Thus, when Aboriginal people identify the Churches with the government and trading companies as elements of a single oppressive presence, they do so with a particular sense of disappointment and betrayal. It was to the Churches that they looked for a sense of belonging and "on them as on no others they pinned hopes of reintegration which have not been fulfilled".¹⁴

The Inter-Church Project on Northern Development

By the late 1960's and early 1970's, Churches were recognizing the need for radical change in the historical relationship with Aboriginal peoples, many of whom were church members. Based on the kind of solidarity evident in Anglican and Roman Catholic responses to the Federal Government's 1969 White Paper on Indian Policy, this new relationship would include political action on social, economic, environmental and cultural issues. The new Church focus acquired added urgency as transnational and crown corporations joined with governments to develop energy resource megaprojects and Aboriginal people were again left out of the decision-making process.

The Inter-Church Project on Northern Development, or Project North, was launched by the Anglican, Roman Catholic and United Churches on 1 September 1975.¹⁵ The Lutheran Church in America – Canada Section, the Mennonite Central Committee, and the Presbyterian Church of Canada joined in 1976. The Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), and two religious communities, the Jesuits and the Oblates, became partners in subsequent years.

A programme of research, communication and education was offered to assist the Churches in: a) supporting the creative activities of northern native peoples in their struggles for justice and the settlement of their land claims; and b) challenging the peoples in southern Canada to become involved in creative action on ethical issues of northern development. Specific activities included: a statement of evidence before the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry (1976), a submission to the Royal Commission on the Northern Environment (1977), a submission to the Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry (1977), organizing of the Northern Native Rights Campaign (1979), a telex to the Minister of Indian Affairs concerning the govern-

ment's failure to appoint a negotiator for the Dene Nation claims as promised (1981), a telex to the Minister of Fisheries asking for a moratorium on the Amax Mine Development and a full judicial examination of the operation (1981), sponsoring of a letter-writing campaign and a number of forums concerning the First Ministers' Conference and constitutional rights of Aboriginal peoples (1983), statement on the *Entrenchment of Aboriginal Self-Government in the Constitution* (1985), a submission to the West Coast Offshore Exploration Environmental Assessment Panel (1985), publication of *Moment of Decision – Aboriginal Self-Government and the Constitution* (1985).

The Aboriginal Rights Coalition

From its earliest days, Project North had given priority to developing contacts with regional indigenous organizations and to supporting solidarity networks in the Churches and regions of Canada. The strength of these regional solidarity networks was evident in an impressive record of making submissions to bodies such as the Berger Commission and participating in national action campaigns. Yet, there was a growing sense of dissatisfaction among the network groups which had no effective involvement in the coalition's national decision-making structures. In March 1987, the sponsoring Churches and Church bodies agreed to suspend Project North's operation for a year of review and restructuring. After an extensive evaluation/consultation process, the Aboriginal Rights Coalition (ARC) was launched in December 1988.

Based on a decentralized model, ARC describes itself as "a coalition of Churches and Church bodies working in partnership and alliance with both Aboriginal (political) organizations and regional network groups".¹⁶ With an emphasis on consultation, participation and networking, ARC notes its evolution "from an inter-Church group to a coalition of three partner groups who make decisions and carry out the work together: Churches, network groups doing the work on the ground across the country, and Aboriginal partners".¹⁷ Through its programme of public education and action, ARC works to support Aboriginal peoples in: achieving just settlements of land rights issues; enhancing economic and political development; realizing the entrenchment of historic rights in the Canadian constitution; reversing the erosion of basic social rights of Aboriginal peoples and communities; seeking reconciliation between Aboriginal peoples and all levels of the Christian community and Canadian society; clarifying the moral and spiritual basis for action on Aboriginal justice concerns; opposing in-

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dustrial and/or military projects that threaten specific Aboriginal communities and the environment.

While ARC has an impressive history of action on behalf of Aboriginal justice issues and a clear commitment to achieving a more honourable relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples of Canada, the coalition continues to face serious challenges. Issues have become more complex and participants more sophisticated. Aboriginal organizations, often with the help of professional advisors, have assumed many of the roles once performed by the Churches. Yet, concern for aboriginal justice is the oldest human rights issue in Canada and ARC must find ways of broadening its base of solidarity beyond a small core of activists. Two specific challenges have been identified: 1) to identify the structural links between Aboriginal communities and other sectors of Canadian society; 2) to explore the theological and spiritual dimensions of commitment to aboriginal jus-

tice issues. Unless these challenges are met, it will be impossible to create a new covenant with the Aboriginal peoples of Canada.

Reflections on Mission and Ecumenism

At the request of the WCC’s Central Committee, the Council’s Commission on World Mission and Evangelism prepared an *Ecumenical Affirmation* which was published in 1982. The text identified a number of convictions under which “Churches in their diverse confessions and traditions and in their various expressions as parishes, monastic communities, religious orders, etc.,” covenant to work for the kingdom of God.¹⁸ Specifically, the Commission asserts: “The impulse for common witness comes from the depth of our faith. ‘Its urgency is underlined when we realize the seriousness of the human predicament and the tremendous task waiting for the Churches at present’”.¹⁹

Among the tremendous tasks which the Churches must address is the challenge of inculturation. John Webster Grant's assessment of missionary activity in Canada offers a succinct expression of this challenge: "If the measure of success is that most Indians have become Christian, the measure of failure is that Christianity has not become Indian".²⁰ With its source and inspiration in the mystery of the incarnation, inculturation sees mission in the perspective of the concrete human and created reality "which the Word assumes in a particular individual, community, institution or culture". Inculturation occurs when Christians express their faith in the symbols and images of their respective culture and the variety of Amerindian responses to the preaching of the Gospel are increasingly well documented.²¹ Since "solidarity is the best teacher of common cultural values", however, the *Ecumenical Affirmation* asserts: "the best way to stimulate the process of inculturation is to participate in the struggle of the less privileged for their liberation".²² In this context, the Aboriginal Rights Coalition may play an important role in the inculturation of the Gospel. Here, it may be helpful to note the Coalition's own recognition of its need to explore the theological and spiritual dimensions of commitment to aboriginal justice issues.

Inculturation may be defined as "the new response of a given culture to the initial proclamation of the Gospel and to the subsequent process of evangelization".²³ The very newness of a specific culture's response to the Gospel will give rise to diversities which may seem to threaten the Church's unity. Yet, ecumenical discussion has consistently affirmed that Christian unity is not to be understood as uniformity. In fact, the unity of the Church is to be realized in the midst of a rich diversity, a diversity that is a function of the Church's catholicity. In the documents of the Second Vatican Council, it is clear that unity does not require the sacrifice of the diverse forms of spirituality, discipline, liturgical rites and theology that have developed among Christians as long as this diversity remains faithful to the apostolic tradition (cf. *Unitatis redintegratio*, nn. 4, 15-16, *Directory*, n. 20).

Inculturation has had an impact on the theology of mission. Tracing the development of an understanding of mission from the documents of the Second Vatican Council to the present, Giancarlo Collet demonstrates the key role played by voices from the Churches of Africa, Asia and Latin America in the Catholic Church's emerging perception of itself as a "world Church".²⁴ When a concept of mission is derived from the real situations in which the Churches find themselves, he contends, "it is possible to start

from a mutual combination of items of equal importance". Based on a reading of the "signs of the times", an integral understanding of mission reflects "existing social conditions, cultural and religious traditions which can be made the point of reference for theological reflection on the mission of the Church". Missionary activity which takes place in a multiplicity of different contexts will show a broad spectrum of expression. "No longer limited to the proclamation of the Gospel, church implanting, the extension of the church, conversion, etc.," mission "embraces a shaping of the 'world' which is expressed with terms like 'total liberation' or 'comprehensiveness'". In this context, ARC can be seen as functioning within the framework of a contextualized theology of mission. Further, it is important to note that this theology of mission is being lived and developed ecumenically.

Among the convictions identified in the 1982 *Ecumenical Affirmation*, the section on "Good News to the Poor" seems particularly applicable to the work of the Aboriginal Rights Coalition. Through the poor of the earth, the text asserts, Churches are learning afresh "to overcome the old dichotomies between evangelism and social action". In brief, "there is no evangelism without solidarity; there is no Christian solidarity that does not involve sharing the knowledge of the kingdom which is God's promise to the poor of the earth".²⁵ While ARC and the other coalitions are readily seen as assisting the Churches in Canada to maintain their common commitment to social action, it is less easy to identify agencies which support these same Churches in joint efforts at evangelization.²⁶

Conclusion

In 1982, the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC issued its statement on *Common Witness*. Drawing on reports of actual experience in common witness, the text affirms:

Witness moves from one unity to another – from that of the members of the Body of Christ in the one Spirit to the greater unity in which all things in heaven and earth will come together under the one Head who is Christ (Eph. 1:10). Essentially it is a work of reconciliation, of people with God, and with one another. To take part in Christian witness also deepens the unity that already exists among Christians. *Witness tends always to extend the fellowship of the Spirit, creating new community*. At the same time it is an essential help for Christians themselves. It promotes among them the conversion and renewal which they always need. It

can strengthen their faith and open up new aspects of the truth of Christ. As such it is a fundamental part of the life of the community that is fully committed to Christ.²⁷

This document was circulated to promote study and discussion. What steps need to be taken to integrate its vision into contemporary missionary activity?

Notes

¹Roger Hutchinson, "Missiology," in Christopher Lind and Joe Mihevic, eds., *Coalitions for Justice* (Ottawa: Novalis, 1994), pp. 320-331. He refers to: David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992).

²*Ibid.*, p. 326.

³*Ibid.*, p. 329.

⁴Aboriginal Rights Coalition, *The Sacred Path: A Journey of Healing for Canadian Churches and Aboriginal Peoples* (Ottawa: Aboriginal Rights Coalition, 1995), pp. 6-9.

⁵Aboriginal Rights Coalition, "The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples", in *Indigenous Perspectives of Jubilee* (Ottawa: Aboriginal Rights Coalition, 1999), p. 23.

⁶John Webster Grant, *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter Since 1534* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), p. 216.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 217.

⁸A position affirmed by two Papal Bulls: *Inter Caetera* of Alexander VI in 1493 and *Sublimus Deus* of Paul III in 1537.

⁹Grant, *Moon of Wintertime*, p. 229.

¹⁰For descriptions of the divisive effects of Christian preaching, see Grant, pp. 255, 201.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 242. According to the 1991 census, 51% of the country's 470,000 Aboriginal people identified themselves as Catholic; 34%, Protestant; 13%, no religion; 2%, other religions.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 245.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

¹⁵Information for this section is summarized from, Peter Hamel, "The Aboriginal Rights Coalition", in Christopher Lind and Joe Mihevic, *Coalitions for Justice*, pp. 16-36.

¹⁶*The Sacred Path: A Journey of Healing*, p. 30.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁸"Mission and Evangelism – an Ecumenical Affirmation," in Michael Kinnamon and Brian E. Cope, eds. *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key*

Texts (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), pp. 372-383. The convictions are listed as: conversion, the Gospel to all realms of life, the Church and its unity in God's mission, mission in Christ's way, Good News to the poor, mission in and to six continents, witness among people of living faiths.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 376.

²⁰Grant, *Moon of Wintertime*, p. 262.

²¹See, Achiel Peelman, *Christianity and Amerindian Spirituality* (Ottawa: St. Paul University, 1993), pp. 48, 50-54, 65-78, 160-165.

²²*The Ecumenical Movement*, p. 376.

²³Peelman, *Christianity and Amerindian Spirituality*, p. 11. See also, p. 12, "The subject of inculturation is neither the missionary, nor the Church that sends him or her. The subject is the Gospel, the living word of God. It is relevant to note here that inculturation begins with the same prefix as the word in-carnation".

²⁴Giancarlo Collet, "Theology of Mission or Missions? The Treatment of a Controversial Term", in Christoph Theobald and Dietmar Mieth, eds., *Unanswered Questions. Concilium 1999/1* (London: SCM Press), pp. 85-92, especially, p. 90.

²⁵*The Ecumenical Movement*, pp. 378-380, especially p. 379.

²⁶The Canadian Churches Forum on Global Ministries does have programmes for outgoing and returning missionaries.

²⁷Joint Working Group, "Common Witness" in *The Ecumenical Movement*, p. 386.

Fr Clodovis Boff, OSM

The Catholic Church and the New Churches in Latin America

Before tackling the subject, I would like to make a few introductory remarks. The topic of new Churches is a very broad, complex and hard one to investigate. What is more, it is controversial, both in theological and sociological terms. Today I will only focus on Pentecostal Churches. I will not mention the New Age sects, which are not as important or as large as the Pentecostal ones, nor will I speak of neo-Christian sects, such as Jehovah Witnesses, the Mormons, etc.

I am not an expert in this area. I will try to offer an overview of the situation, since neither you nor I are theoreticians. We are working people, people devoted to action, so we are not experts, we are not knowledgeable. Moreover, I will only speak of Brazil for I believe that the experience of Brazil actually reflects the phenomenon as it occurs throughout the world. I will present a general view of the phenomenon of new Pentecostal Churches: how they are organized, how they relate to one another. Our ultimate horizon will always be ecumenism: how can we come together in the Church and how can we come together in the social mission of the Churches.

I. Seeing (Socio-Analytical)

1. The Pentecostal Churches are a growing phenomenon with great social visibility. They say that there are some 300/400 million people in the world. This is a hypothetical figure. They say, also in this case hypothetically, that in Latin America every year some 3,500,000 people leave the Catholic Church for the Pentecostal Churches. This means 400 people every hour, 400 Catholics every hour. But these are all hypothetical, unsubstantiated figures. An exact statistical figure is the one concerning Brazil: in 1991, Pentecostals accounted for 10% of the Brazilian population (13 million people at the time), but the percentage of growth is estimated at 15% per year, which means that today there should be some 22,000,000 in Brazil. Consequently, the Catholic Church is declining: ten years ago, 85% of the population was Catho-

lic. Today, Catholics account for only 78% of the population. These figures compel us to look towards the future and ask ourselves: where are we going? Some say that 20 years from now most of the population of Latin America will belong to Pentecostal Churches and that the largest Catholic continent will lose its religious hegemony. Others, instead, say that the Catholic community is very large, deeply-rooted, very strong and that it will withstand this confessional change.

Pentecostal Churches represent a highly visible phenomenon because they make extensive use of the *media*. They have hundreds of radio networks, dozens of television programmes; in Brazil they even have a major television network called "Record". They are very boisterous. More show than substance, as they say. But their assemblies are crowded, rowdy. Furthermore, they are highly experienced and competent in the use of the *media*, so much so that they are able to fill whole stadiums for exorcisms, crowd parks with thousands of people. In parliament there is a bloc of evangelists, 30 or 50 Federal deputies of whom the majority are Pentecostals; and the political presence of the Pentecostal party is growing. Also in the social landscape their presence is conspicuous; they stand out because of the way they dress, because they always carry a Bible, because they preach in the streets, etc.

2. We should distinguish between two types of Pentecostal Churches. There are the traditional ones that originated at the beginning of the century in Latin America. The largest one is the "Assembly of God" (which accounts for two thirds of Pentecostals). They came to Latin America from Scandinavia and Italy, via the United States. They have a typically American approach: style, speeches, organization. Their main characteristic derives from their very name: Pentecostals, the event of the Spirit, the Spirit that manifests itself through glossolalia (the gift of tongues). This is typical of Pentecostals. If one does not speak in tongues he/she is not yet baptized in the

Spirit, he/she is not a genuine Pentecostal yet. One has to speak in tongues to become this new creature.

Then came the neo-Pentecostals, namely the new Pentecostal Churches that were founded over the past 20 years. Their largest church is called "Universal Church of the Kingdom of God". It is a very powerful Church: it has seven million followers all over the world and as many as 2,500 temples. In Brazil it owns a television network and a major weekly magazine (Folha universal) which runs one million copies. This new Pentecostal Church, which is very influential and grows more than any other, is built on three pillars: healing, exorcism and the theology of prosperity that conveys the following message, "God wants us to be rich, lucky, healthy, successful". Their theology is quite original: to achieve prosperity one needs to have complete faith, so one must risk everything in order to gain everything. Since you are risking everything, you give everything you have to your church: your property, your money, even if you need it to pay the rent, to buy medicines, but you have to risk it so that God will reward you one hundredfold, he will give you prosperity. There are three other aspects that deserve to be highlighted.

- The entrepreneurial organization handles 1 billion dollars a year; it is one of the 30 largest businesses in Brazil. It was founded by an entrepreneur who ran a lottery business. He appointed and consecrated himself a bishop.

- It is syncretistic; for instance, it takes from Christianity the sacramentals: the holy water, the oil, the blessing of the fruits of the earth, house keys, clothes, titles.

- They do not abide by a strict morality like traditional Pentecostals do: the faithful do not wear the same puritan clothes.

They buy down town movie theaters and transform them into temples. Last March, in Rio de Janeiro, I walked past one of these temples that used to be a big workshop and at the entrance there was a billboard that said: "No more suffering, here is the way out! Monday: prosperity worship (employment, housing, shopping, business ...); Tuesday: health worship (healing, etc.); Wednesday: worship of the Holy Spirit (to receive glossolalia); Thursday: worship for the family (drug problems, separations, divorce, ...); Friday: liberation rituals (exorcism); Saturday: plentiful life; Sunday: praise unto God. Everyday they celebrate four sessions of worship and the temples are open 24 hours a day, welcoming the faithful who come and go. Such examples give us an idea of what the style of these churches is like and why they are so

successful.

Why are these new Churches growing so much? I am not a sociologist but on the basis of my reading and discussions I have come to the following conclusion: the success of the new Churches is the result of a threefold abandonment:

a. social abandonment: especially socio-economic. These new Churches are the religions of derelicts, they are the religions of affliction. They reach out especially to the poorest of the poor, to the miserable. During a conversation with a cab driver, who was a Baptist, I asked what he thought of these new Pentecostal Churches, and he answered: they are the intensive care units for those in misery. It is their last resort. They reach out especially to the uprooted: people who leave the country and move to the city, young people with no family, social or religious ties, etc. These situations of abandonment cause people to seek new religious alternatives. Paul Fresto (?), a British sociologist who works in Brazil, wrote: "social misery empties the conventional Churches and fills up sects".

b. existential abandonment: losing one's bearings, anomy, emptiness, cultural chaos, crisis of the meaning of life. This is due to the fact that modern society is disillusioned; it is the society of apparatuses, of pragmatism, of secularization. It is also characterized by large structures that depersonalize. In such a setting, sects offer a universe, a world that has meaning, order; a world in which one belongs, has an identity, is safe.

A survey conducted two years ago by a sociology centre in Rio de Janeiro revealed that the reasons that lead people to convert to these Churches are not so much financial or work-related (only 8% convert for these reasons) but rather they are of a social-existential nature: illness (34%), family conflicts (23%), alcoholism (15%), emotional problems (9%). Stating that only the poor turn to these Churches would be oversimplifying matters greatly.

c. pastoral abandonment: for which the Catholic Church is responsible. Why does not the Catholic Church respond to the problem posed by sects, that is to say to social and existential abandonment? I will try to give a simple answer also because it is hard to tackle this issue. To begin with, there is a demographic problem, a quantitative problem. The document drawn up by the Bishops that met in Puebla states in n. 78: "population growth has exceeded the current capacity of the [Catholic] Church to bring the Good News to all". I work in seven *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro and

I can see that where we have one Catholic church, they have five, seven, ten. We do not have the means to reach out to everyone, that would be impossible, so people turn to the evangelical churches in order to bridge the pastoral gaps that we leave open. We do not have enough personnel, facilities. Secondly, the problem does not only have to do with quantity but with quality as well:

- we still follow the traditional parish system and have little pastoral creativity;

- in terms of quality, Catholic ecclesiastical structures are too cumbersome, too rigid, too centralized to adapt to these new urban realities and to respond to the new requirements of the people;

- furthermore, ecclesiastical structures are too rationalized, in the modern, Weberian sense of the word; this means that they lack the mystical side, they are not appealing, attractive. They are efficient, but they lack the sacred dimension, the fire, the spirit. The major concerns of the Catholic Church concern doctrine, orthodoxy, morality, administrative matters.

One can see that the Catholic Church is losing faithful (the estimate is at 3,500,000 a year in Latin America). The faithful that the Church is shedding are the ones who have a very weak tie with the institution, the ones who have a traditional faith. The Catholic Church loses only the ones it used to possess, but did it really ever possess these Catholics who are now turning to new Churches? This is the problem. In some cases, by joining the new Churches people make progress in their lives because they gain a new Christian identity, they live a religious experience that might be considered as a successful outcome of evangelization.

Another objection is that, according to some, in Latin America the Catholic Church is too politicized and not religious enough. For this reason people seek out other religious agencies for their spiritual needs. This statement is both true and false. It is true that by focusing only on social aspects the religious needs of the people are neglected so that they are forced to look elsewhere to find what they are looking for. We liberation theologians and Catholics of basic communities are aware of this. Today we talk about recovering the spiritual, mystical roots of social commitment. There is a false side to the above statement: basic communities and the social commitment of the Church address one of the root causes of sects which is social neglect, economic abandonment. So, in a way, it remedies one of the causes that induces people to leave the Catholic Church and search for other Churches. Furthermore, there are very clear data: basic ecclesial communities, social ministries, those who belong to the Church of liberation do not flow into sects; rather,

they represent a dam to hold back sects, a defence against them. In my Diocese, Rio de Janeiro, which is the most religious because it is exceedingly traditionalist, sects grow more than in any other Brazilian Diocese. So, religious ministry alone cannot solve this problem.

To conclude with this aspect, I would like to list a few points that explain the success of sects:

- aa. The success of sects is due more to their qualities than to our failures: in other words, people do not join sects because something is lacking in the Church but because in these other Churches they find a better spiritual and emotional answer than they do in the Catholic Church. They are drawn by a more satisfactory offer on the popular level;

- bb. Are the new Churches a problem or an answer? Are they rivals of the Catholic Church or are they partners in preaching the Gospel?

- cc. Whatever the answers to the questions may be, there is no denying that to us sects are not the main problem. The main problem is the spiritual and material misery that beget these sects, which respond to the problem as best as they can. Upstream, at the root of sects, there is social and pastoral neglect.

Sects are a secondary problem.

II. Judging (Theological-Pastoral)

I will try to list what attracts people to the new Churches, the reasons for their success, and what instead drives one away.

What attracts: subjective factors:

1. The direct experience of God, overflowing with emotion, with wonder; an experience of rebirth, a change of life. They are Churches of conversion, which one joins at one's free will. Next to these aspects there is emotionalism, which at times leads to mass hysteria.

2. People feel welcome. A poor person, a wretched person, an outcast who is despised, socially humiliated, finds in the new Churches hospitality, comfort, the Good News, and this helps him/her become rooted in the community. The question remains: to what extent can these new Churches be considered communities? For instance, the "Universal Church of the Kingdom of God" does not create a community; it has patrons, it is like a huge religious supermarket.

3. They convey a strong sense of identity. They say: "We are believers, chosen, saints, elected by God". This generates self-esteem, pride, a sense of dignity. The negative side: the arrogance of the pure, contempt

I. Il gruppo Italiano esprime, prima di tutto la sua soddisfazione per il modo con cui è stato organizzato il corso e in particolare per l'apporto dei tre relatori.

1. Dr. Konrad Raiser, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, ci ha fatto capire meglio il rapporto necessario e complesso tra Missione e Ecumenismo due realtà che vanno indissolubilmente unite nella nostra vita e nella nostra azione missionaria per annunciare un Evangelo credibile.

2. Sr. Donna Geernaert, SC, Director of Interfaith Relations of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, in particolare ci ha colpito mostrandoci come la Conferenza Episcopale del suo paese imposti tutta la sua azione pastorale con una apertura ecumenica. In tal modo siamo stati invitati a comprendere che l'Ecumenismo ci chiede di fare insieme alle Chiese Cristiane sorelle tutto ciò che la nostra coscienza ecclesiale non c'impone di fare da soli.

3. Fr. Clodovis Boff, OSM, Brazil, Professor of Theology ci ha immersi nel mondo del Pentecostalismo brasiliano, aiutandoci a compiere opera di discernimento in un mondo così lontano, ma anche così vicino alle esperienze, naturalmente variegata che noi incontriamo nella Missione.

4. **Per questo, noi proponiamo che per arricchire l'esperienza che si è fatta in questo corso, il SEDOS diventi un "Open Space"; e, dunque, che alle sue iniziative siano invitati di norma rappresentanti delle altre Chiese sorelle; e, dandosi il caso, rappresentanti di altre religioni, prima di tutto Ebraismo, Islam, Buddhismo e Induismo.**

II. Questo nostro corso si è svolto mentre alle porte dell'Italia era, ed è, in atto un tragico conflitto. Questa coincidenza ci ha particolarmente turbati perché la guerra in Jugoslavia e la pulizia etnica nel Kosovo avvengono implicando, in qualche modo, anche i Paesi di tutti i partecipanti al gruppo. Abbiamo rilevato, insieme, che, naturalmente, questa guerra ha, come cause primarie, gli interessi economici, il militarismo e il nazionalismo. Tuttavia abbiamo anche messo in rilievo che, senza una seminazione millenaria di odio, di nazionalismo, di identità religiosa esageratamente sottolineata tra i cattolici, gli ortodossi, ed i musulmani nei Balcani, questa guerra mai avrebbe potuto trovare l'humus per svilupparsi. Da qui il nostro impegno di lavorare perché nelle nostre Chiese sia messo al primo posto il messaggio di Gesù, e non invece la riaffermazione della nostra identità confessionale.

III. Abbiamo anche riflettuto sul fatto che la guerra in Jugoslavia e la pulizia etnica nel Kosovo si sono imposte all'opinione pubblica occidentale perché tutti i giorni le varie televisioni occidentali mettono in primo piano questo evento. Ma noi sappiamo bene, anche per l'esperienza personale o per quella di tante nostre consorelle e confratelli che, adesso, nel mondo sono in atto molti altri conflitti e guerre sanguinosi che hanno provocato e provocano immense devastazioni. Basti ricordare il conflitto in Sudan, nei Grandi Laghi, la guerra civile in Liberia e Sierra Leone, la guerra civile nel Congo, la guerra civile in Angola, la guerra tra Etiopia e Eritrea.... E il moltiplicarsi dei conflitti in Asia. Ma queste guerre dimenticate dai grandi mass media mondiali, per l'opinione pubblica occidentale semplicemente non esistono. Eppure noi siamo convinti che il conflitto radicale che incombe sul mondo attuale è quello Nord-Sud, matrice di ogni conflitto, perché il ricco Nord del mondo pur minoritario come numero di abitanti, cerca d'imporre il suo dominio e i suoi interessi politici e militari ai tre quarti degli abitanti del pianeta che vivono nell'emisfero meridionale. Noi pensiamo che sia compito particolare delle missionarie e dei missionari alzare la voce perché i problemi del Sud del mondo e le responsabilità del Nord, e anche delle chiese del Nord, per la sua devastazione non siano mai dimenticati.

Conclusione: Queste giornate ci hanno mostrato luci di speranza e segnali di angoscia. Noi speriamo che la discesa dello Spirito Santo, di cui si fa memoria nella imminente Pentecoste, ci dia la forza e coraggio per essere testimoni umili e generosi della Parola che si è fatta carne per la vita del mondo.

of others, a sectarian spirit.

4. Community participation. The very animated celebrations, with beautiful songs, filled with enthusiasm, fervour, spontaneous prayer. Participation in services: 1/3 of the faithful have an assignment in their church. They are active participants, not patrons.

5. Vital Christ-centred message: Christ the Lord, the Saviour, the Bible which is at the centre of everything, the Spirit that is infused into everyone. Here too we see the shadow of Biblicist fundamentalism, a lack of theological culture.

6. Ethical rigour: they offer a new model of life, a healthier, more dignified, clean life. They appear as wholesome, decent people. This attracts simple people.

7. Enthusiasm in proclaiming the Gospel; they have energy, they believe what they say. The dark side here is the spirit of conquest, proselytism, fanaticism, psychological blackmail. But there is no denying their profound conviction and the energy with which they proclaim Jesus Christ.

There are other objective factors that contribute to the success of the new Churches and these too have their dark side:

a. they have high penetration in the poorest social groups, the outcasts; they reach out to the poorest among the poor, more so than the Catholic Church and basic communities. The dark side is that they manipulate the people in misery, the defenceless, the ignorant;

b. institutional flexibility: they are charismatic Churches, they are decentralized and do not have a cumbersome structure. They are light, streamlined structures. The training of the ministers is very practical, straightforward. Six months to a year are sufficient to train a good minister. The dark side: they are ignorant ministers, the Churches easily splinter, become fragmented.

c. good communication: they are capable of communicating the core message effectively and they are convincing. A debate between a minister and a bishop is a disaster for the bishop whose language is based on dogma, canon law, while the minister is free and focuses entirely on the Holy Spirit, the Bible and Jesus Christ. Many talk, but they repeat the same things over and over again, variations on the Spirit, on Christ the Saviour, on salvific faith;

d. apostolic enterprise: they act as professionals in the use of pastoral tools, apostolic techniques, they employ all modern means of communication although their mentality is not modern at all.

Lastly, what shocks, is the liabilities side of the

balance sheet, so to speak. In addition to the points that I have already indicated, such as fundamentalism, emotionalism, proselytism, etc., there are three aspects that I have not mentioned yet:

aa. financial abuse of the poor, at times even exploitation. Every member of the faithful must literally pay the biblical tithe;

bb. alienated and alienating political position. They do not drive people towards social commitment. They relate to society in a sectarian manner;

cc. anti-ecumenical, anti-dialogical attitude. They do not dialogue either with Catholics or the popular religion or the culture. They are iconoclasts.

I do not dare express a personal opinion, I will merely report the position of a great archbishop of Brazil who goes by the name of Dom Zumbi. He was a great Black leader, a martyr of the Black independence movement in Brazil. Dom Zumbi says that as regards the poor, Pentecostalism, the new Churches are helpful; people have a great deal to gain from these Churches. They do more good than bad. I tend to agree. Indeed, when I go to the *favelas* and I see the Pentecostals preaching there, at times I thank the Lord because he has sent them to comfort his people, to offer them a more decent, more honest, more human life. It seems to me that they have been sent by God. What is the fundamental criterion on the basis of which we are to judge these new Churches? The Catholic Church? I think that would be a mistake. The criterion is the Kingdom of God which brings life, dignity, grace to everyone. If they bring the Kingdom of God, God's Christ, even if they are not the Catholic Church it is all right. As Paul the Apostle says: whether hypocritically or sincerely, what truly matters is that Christ is proclaimed.

III. Implementation (Pastoral Care)

The answers that the Catholic Church is currently providing to the problem of the "threefold abandonment" which accounts for the success of the new Churches are:

- the popular missions in line with new evangelization: in other words, by means of popular missions the Catholic Church wants to rejuvenate parishes, create communities, rekindle faith, increase the participation of the faithful in the ministries, the sense of prayer, welcoming those who have stopped practising;

- basic ecclesial communities are one answer to this fundamental problem: there is a great affinity between the basic communities and the new Churches.

There is a structural analogy between CEBs and the new Churches: 1) the centrality of the Bible, even though in CEBs it is not read in a fundamentalistic way; 2) the community experience, although CEBs are less charismatic and more democratic communities; 3) participation in the ministries, in church services; 4) missionary spirit, CEBs are spreading, they preach the Gospel and reach out to those who have distanced themselves. Obviously, there are some differences as well. For instance, CEBs encourage social and political awareness, they have a very clear social commitment which is to transform the system, they are open to ecumenical dialogue, not only in terms of traditional ecumenism but also in terms of macro-ecumenism: dialogue with Afro-Brazilian religions, other indigenous religions, etc. It is clear that the CEBs lack something which instead the new Churches have: for example, the emotional aspect which is integrated into the experience of faith. What is missed the most is institutional freedom: CEBs operate within the framework of parishes, Dioceses, under the control of the Bishop, of the parish priest, and if the Bishop, or the parish priest does not want them there is nothing they can do.

- Renewal of the Catholic Church, this is an inward-looking response; in other words, what does the Catholic Church have to learn from the new Churches, since in part it is responsible for this abandonment?

- 1) Strong experience of God that Catholics feel the lack of, an experiential faith. One speaks of a Catholicism based on conviction, but how can one be convinced without experience, without spirit?;
- 2) strong Catholic identity. I remember that in São Paulo Catholic Charismatics filled a stadium with 120,000 people; 30,000 could not get in because there was no more room left. Their motto was: "I am happy to be Catholic".

Some will have realized that I have used the word "sect" often. Perhaps it is best that I use the term "new Churches" because the word "sect" has a negative, demeaning meaning. However, I can use the word "sect" as an adjective. In fact, there are sectarian attitudes not only in the so-called sects but also in the Catholic Church, in religious congregations. So, as an adjective, I think it is rather appropriate.

Charismatics represent one of the Catholic answers to the problem posed by new Churches. Catholic Charismatics have many things in common with the new Pentecostal Churches: the role of the Holy Spirit, glossolalia, and the enthusiastic, emotional style with which they express their faith, not to mention

mass gatherings. Because of this, they are considered to be Catholic Pentecostals which is why some sociologists speak of the Charismatic Pentecostal movement as a whole, a continuous movement, which is more or less homogenous and presents internal differences. At this point I want to throw down the gauntlet: perhaps our difficulty in understanding and accepting the Charismatics reveals our inability to understand Pentecostals? In other words, if we do not dialogue with our own Pentecostals, who are the Charismatics, how can we expect to dialogue with the Pentecostals of other Churches? Some say that Charismatics are the Catholic answer to the problem posed by the new Churches, the Catholic way of meeting these requests for life meaning, participation, experience of the Spirit, love for the word of God, autonomy of the laity, emotional, even psycho-physical therapies, etc. A great Brazilian Charismatic, Father Marcelo Rossi, admits that the Pentecostals have awoken us and spurred us into action. He said an interesting thing: Catholic Charismatics have grown more than the Pentecostals. Just consider a few figures: 20 years ago, there were 300,000 Charismatics in Brazil. Today there are eight million. CEBs involve as many as five million regular participants and, in 20 years, they have almost doubled. It is such a telling phenomenon, also in terms of numbers, that one cannot but stop to consider and analyze it.

Fr Clodovis Boff, OSM

The Search for Justice and Solidarity: Meeting the "New Churches"

I. Background notes Historical introduction

1 One of the ways of ecumenism is ecumenism of action for an ecumenical encounter based on a theological and doctrinal debate, the way of missionary collaboration among the ministers and the way of prayer, which can be the most effective, also because it is more simple, more within the reach of people, especially the laity.

2. This movement of ecumenism of action has a long history. It started in 1925, based on the idea that life is action. The motto of the movement was: "doctrine separates, action unites". It has left a great mark on the structure of the World Council of Churches. For instance, the programme on racism, women, human rights, ecology, etc. that the World Council of Churches has been carrying out since 1966 is the movement's contribution to the Council. In the '60's, in Latin America it started ISAL (Church and Society in Latin America), which began to speak of the social *diakonia* of the Church not on the basis of a Church-centred approach but rather of the notion that the Kingdom of God has to be placed in society. In the '80's the official ecumenical bodies were founded: CLAI (Latin American Council of Churches) and, in Brazil, CONIC (National Council of Christian Churches), which played a very important role under the dictatorships, denouncing *desaparecidos*, torture, assassination. Today, they continue to issue common documents on issues like foreign debt, neoliberalism, unemployment. Their documents have quite a significant impact.

3. Around the '60's CEBs (Basic Ecclesial Communities) were born which introduced a new form of ecumenism: ecumenism not for the poor, for their justice and liberation, but ecumenism carried out by them, by the poor themselves, who join forces in order to engage in social struggles. Catholics and Pentecostals campaigned together against the agrarian reform, to regain civil rights under dictatorships. This was possible because hunger is ecumenical, the most ecumenical reality there is; it is neither Catholic nor Protestant. Liberation theology was born with the basic communities, like flesh and bone, it was born ecumenical. Just think, for instance, of Rubem Alves, a Methodist

minister who in 1969 published a book entitled "Liberation theology" (which the publisher changed to "Theology of Hope") and shortly thereafter, in 1970, Gustavo Gutierrez, a Catholic Father, wrote the book entitled "Liberation theology". Still today, both Catholics and Protestants continue to develop liberation theology. I myself have written a book — which was published in the Liberation theology series — with an American Baptist minister, Jorge Pixlei (?) on the preferential option for the poor because justice also is not atheist or religious, Catholic or Protestant; justice is for everyone, for human individuals.

4. Since the '80's ecumenism of action has been faced with new problems: 1) it is no longer sufficient to say that doctrine separates whereas action unites because today we can see that an action that is not supported by sound doctrine cannot go very far, it is not strong. Action needs to be based on a doctrine. 2) The rise of the new Pentecostal Churches, which are more numerous than the established Churches that are declining. They present themselves with a much stronger pastoral and missionary dynamism than the established Churches. They are the churches of the poor, of the outcasts; they are the expression of the religiosity of the forsaken which reach out to millions of people.

II. The New Churches and Social Action

Let us begin with the following question: do the new Pentecostal Churches serve the poor or do they alienate them? Sociologists have contrasting views. One trend believes they are alienating, because they are religions of evasion; others, instead, say they are useful, helpful. In the beginning, liberation theology was against the new Churches, it did not believe in the value of this phenomenon. Recently, however, it has become more cautious, less convinced of its stance; it considers this phenomenon with greater interest and sympathy. The interpretation and thesis that I wish to present here is as follows: the new Churches are alienating, they alienate, they do not transform the system at the macro-social level, at the systemic level; however, at the micro-social level, on a small scale, at the community level, they are useful, they are reformist, meliorist.

1. In order to understand their social strength we must always consider the context in which they work, the social groups that they reach out to, namely the outcasts. What is exclusion: extreme deprivation of means for survival, of work. Unemployment is the first form of exclusion, exclusion from the market. Then comes exclusion from civil rights; they are excluded from the official social system, so they are exposed, vulnerable groups that have no social security whatsoever. These are the Pentecostals. Pentecostalism helps the outcasts in their daily struggle for survival. The new Churches help them in their fight for survival by strengthening their subjectivity, building up their self-esteem, giving them a sense of dignity. A poor man said to me: what kills is not hunger, it is humiliation, contempt. Pentecostals give them the sense of dignity. They are born again, they are the children of God, they are chosen, saved. And the outcasts lift their heads up and fight to survive. This occurs especially with Blacks, who are the most outcast, who are often lumped with the marginalized, drug pushers, thieves, prostitutes, etc., but when they become Pentecostals they say: we are good people, we are worthy people. And they are respected because people look at them and say: he is a decent man, she is a decent woman. This recovered individuality is underpinned by faith, Pentecostal faith. The converts are born again, they are new people, they are not old people like the rest, like modern Catholics. They are new people, they are different, they have experienced a personal revolution. It may seem like an illusion, and perhaps it is, but it does have a social effect.

The other important aspect is that they all carry the Holy Spirit, everyone can speak in tongues. It does not matter that it is an illusion; such a conviction gives them the strength to have control take over their life. They especially are able to overcome the sense of powerlessness in a society that excludes them. One might object that we are now talking about a psychological, emotional subject, not a social, historical one. But if there is not an individual subject, who walks and talks, how can there be a social and political one? If the individual does not even know how to walk, how can he/she be expected to take part in a parade, an event, a trade union, a peoples' movement? He/she is crushed, annulled before himself. He must be helped to his feet. So, before we talk of a social subject we need to talk of a human subject.

2. A second aspect is the moralization of private life, family life. In other words, private life is governed by a strict ethics. The context of derelicts, outcasts, is that of alcohol abuse, drugs, sex, violence, the breakdown of social relations. Pentecostalism introduces a strict ethics which, however, has very positive social effects. According to sociologists, for those

who live in misery in the *favelas* of Brazil the popular alternative to the drug culture is Pentecostalism because it challenges the drug culture and recovers substance abusers, especially alcoholics. I once had an excellent catechist in the *favelas*; her father was an alcoholic and we prayed for him, we went to see him, etc., but we could not get him away from alcohol. During a Pentecostal worship session he converted, he handed himself over to Jesus, he received the Holy Spirit, he spoke in tongues and gave up alcohol. I have lost the catechist, but she has recovered her father. This strict ethics is economical, it leads to parsimony: people no longer spend money on medicine to cure depression, on vain perfumes, on fashion. To the poor this is important, they live better. Furthermore, the converts are very professional and honest; indeed, one often comes across job offers published in the leading Brazilian newspapers that read something like this: "wanted: housekeeper, preferably Pentecostal". In fact, they are hard working, they do not steal, they are honest, they accept the salary they are offered. Moral rigour translates into professional rigour. Moreover, violence is declining. Pentecostals are able to live in the *favelas* next to drug pedlars, they approach them and even succeed in converting them. They do extraordinary pastoral work in the prisons. There is a group of Pentecostal police officers who do a great job. In the Bangú high security prison in Rio de Janeiro, 75% of the prisoners are Pentecostal converts. Are Pentecostal women, in the context of male exclusivism in which the man is truly a man, alienated or valued? They actually do not transform the patriarchal system, but they do introduce significant reforms, they improve their own social condition. Here are the results: Pentecostalism helps the woman to achieve greater personal independence *vis à vis* her husband. This is the theological foundation of their faith. They are convinced that the woman has entrusted herself to Jesus, that she is the servant of Jesus, not of her husband. This is important, it gives her personal autonomy, it gives her an almost modern mentality: the autonomy of the individual who makes choices and says 'I choose', even if the husband does not agree, and takes responsibility. Pentecostal faith domesticates the man, encourages him to spend more time at home, to take an interest in his children's education, to be more faithful to his wife, because rigorous ethics applied to sex has a tremendous effect; adultery is condemned as the devil's doing, one goes to hell for it. This gives greater stability to the family which is still the existential anchor that helps one to survive in this context of social abandonment. It also domesticates the man because it makes him more civilized, kind, peaceful, condescending; he no longer beats his wife, and this is very important because domestic violence

inflicted by the husband on his wife is a daily affair, especially among the outcasts of society, where violence is part of everyday life. If, furthermore, the husband gives up alcohol or drugs, it almost like heaven. All this makes the family more united, strong, secure and this to the poor is important in order not to sink utterly under social calamity. What is more, women leave the home to go to worship, they partake in the ministries, they are missionaries. On the one hand Pentecostalism brings the husband back home and, on the other, it takes the woman out of the house and into society.

3. The last point is that Pentecostals repair the social fabric. Modern neoliberalist society, with the destructive state of well-being and its extreme competitiveness leads to anomy, degradation, unemployment, violence, the collapse of social relations. Pentecostals recreate relations of primary solidarity, starting from the community; they call themselves brothers and sisters, when someone is unemployed everyone helps him/her to find a job, when sick people visit him/her in hospital, when someone dies people comfort the relatives. They create a rescue network. A Pentecostal never reaches the limit of social abandonment because his/her brothers and sisters are there to help him/her. There is a limit to this, though: they do not address structures, they do not challenge neoliberalism. Society is not to be transformed, it is to be conquered, from a confessional point of view. They say we will have a new Brazil when a Pentecostal President is elected; a man filled with the Holy Spirit, who speaks in tongues, works miracles, etc. We must understand that the outcasts seek immediate results, problems are vital and pressing, they want to solve them here and now, they cannot afford to wait until tomorrow or the day after; if they can solve them today with the blessing of the minister why should they go to a trade union or a political party to vote for a politician who will take action in five or 10 years? One is in deep trouble and problems need to be addressed at once. But Pentecostalism is not just a piankiller, it is a solution that really solves problems at the community, family, personal levels.

I at the micro level the new Churches are elpful, at the macro-structural level do they or do they not transform the sys-

tem? Do they contribute to transforming the foundations of social relations? More specifically, let us consider the issue of political choices and parties.

A. Pentecostals are apolitical; they are not interested in politics, they are indifferent towards politics as a commitment for social change. The new Churches do not make their members, their communities politically aware; in this sense they are truly alienated from

- We in group 5 were enriched by the presence of Michael Hans UHL from the Lutheran tradition. We suggest that such openness continue in future seminars.

a) What we became aware of:

During the seminar we were aware that ecumenism is an integral part of mission; the issues are complex, but we can all take some steps; that working together for unity brings both joys and pain. We were aware of our need as Roman Catholics to be sensitive to avoid language which may be offensive to others. One incidence of this that has been pointed out is the term “indulgences” in the Papal Bull *Incarnationis Mysterium* on the Jubilee. This word recalls a painful historical event which has lead to our having to deal with division even down to the present day.

b) What we can DO:

If ecumenism is integral to mission then it would be important and helpful:

- ❖ To use the visitations by the general administration
 - ❖ To find out what is done ecumenically on the local level of the congregation
 - ❖ To encourage and promote involvement in ecumenical activities
 - ❖ To include a theoretical and practical dimension of ecumenism in our formation programmes
 - ❖ To publish articles in the congregational bulletin, etc., to help raise awareness.
- a) What SEDOS might do:
- ❖ Publish the congregational ecumenical programmes and experiences among the members of SEDOS
 - ❖ We ask SEDOS to make our concern about “indulgences” known to the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity

the system. Let us try to consider the roots of this non-political attitude: a privatized, individualistic faith. Pentecostals are aware of the great social problems such as unemployment, indebtedness, etc., but they say that with the second advent of Christ every problem will be solved (millenarianism). Violence, war, etc. are signs that precede the advent of Christ. Hence, an apocalyptic messianism, with no political implications.

B. This non-political option is revealed by their political and party-political attitude. As regards political parties, Pentecostals present two characteristics: 1) they are corporatists (they only vote for Pentecostal candidates). The ministers indicate the names of the candidates to be voted for. Their political choices are not based on programs but on names; 2) they view society in terms of Pentecostal Christianity: Brazil, Latin America, the entire world must be transformed into a great Pentecostal system. Just an example: at the last political elections held in Brazil in 1998, the "Universal Church of the Kingdom of God", which is only 20 years old, got 14 Federal delegates of various parties, all right-wing, elected. With respect to the centre the Pentecostal policy is right wing. This bloc of politicians also defend corporative interests in Parliament. There are five main corporative interests: freedom of religion and worship, presence in the media, religious education in schools, freedom of mission among the Indios, against abortion and homosexuality. That also explains why they are right-wing: if you want to obtain favours from the ruler you have to be his ally, hence an ally of the party in power, and of those who dominate and can grant them these favours happen to belong to the right wing.

C. There are cracks in this basic conservative political attitude. Pentecostals appear as a homogenous bloc, without divisions, but there is actually a leftist minority among them. For instance, in the State of Rio de Janeiro the governor belongs to the left wing, the deputy governor is a Black Pentecostal from the *favelas*, Benedita da Silva, also left-wing. There is Caio Prado Junior, the Pentecostal minister, who has an "esperança" factory for street children, he too is leftist. There is the great "Viva Rio" movement against violence and kidnapping in Rio de Janeiro, to which many Pentecostals belong. There are basic groups that open people's eyes to social problems: many Pentecostals have joined the movement of the "landless", which is the largest Brazilian social movement. The police strike in Belo Horizonte was organized by Pentecostals. During a recent land invasion in Brasilia, everyone was Pentecostal. Pressing needs force them to take a stance, to open up. We have to take advantage of this.

The conclusion is that in Pentecostalism there is a

prophetic-political potential which is that of the Bible. If one can prove to them that the Bible talks about the struggle for justice, they will become the most revolutionary of all revolutionaries because such is the word of God. A chief of police complained to me about the fact that Pentecostals are too fanatical and he said that instead of abiding by the law they say "it is written in the Bible": God has created the earth for everyone so we must occupy the earth. Observe that for ecumenical dialogue if one refers to the Bible methodically progress can be made.

III. Ecumenism of Action and The "New Churches": What Can We Do?

How can we approach Pentecostals? It is hard because it is not just the doctrine that separates us but also social action. Pentecostals generally criticize us because we Catholics are very politically-oriented and forget about evangelization; we Catholics criticize Pentecostals because they are only concerned about religion and do not engage in politics. On the political plane too we are opposed. How can we overcome these differences? I would like to read to you what the basic communities wrote at the last inter-ecclesial meeting that I attended. We had to see how to engage in ecumenism with the Pentecostals starting from social action. Here is what they wrote: "We have to overcome some biases towards the members of Pentecostal Churches and, in the Catholic Church itself, towards Charismatic Renewal. In order to begin a dialogue with our Pentecostal brothers and sisters it would be best to start from daily coexistence and concrete actions and struggles in favour of the people, rooted in the Bible. These actions are paving the way for a new ecumenical dialogue and practical cooperation. The simple fact that brothers and sisters of Pentecostal churches are present is a sign that the Spirit of God wants us to live in communion". So it is possible to come together as long as everything we do is based on the Bible. I wonder whether these minorities might serve as a bridge for a dialogue with the majority of Pentecostals. I will take this one step further: could not Charismatics be a front for dialogue with Pentecostals, since they have a liturgical and spiritual profile that is very close to that of Pentecostals. I think this is a viable solution.

We have to think of a new model of action that no longer presents the heavy, rigid, Marxist features of the past. It has to be a militant model that is more charismatic, more spiritual, more integrated, more flexible. This type of action would not only be more appreciated by the Pentecostals but also more biblical, more Christian, more spiritual. It may be that in this way dynamic dialogue and ecumenical growth can be begun.

SEDOS Residential Seminar 1999

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MFIC	Bourke, Karen	RSCJ	Jiménez, Marta
MFIC	Byrne, Moya		
MFIC	Talbot, Annette	RSCJ	Hinde, Mary

RSCM	Brand, Veronica	SUSC	Catteau, Benoît Marie
RSCM	De Lima Pereira, Rosa		
RSM	Tracey, Margaret	SVD	Castro, Vicente
		SVD	Pape, Carlos
		SVD	Kowalik, Marek
SA	Conde, Silvia		
SA	Wilson, Clare		
		GUEST	
SCMM	Vanwesenbeeck, Dymphna		
SCMM	Newsham, Anne Marie		Böld, Marianne
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		Evangelical	Lofthouse, Peter
SUSC	Cowie, Pauline	Orthodox	Pirri-Simonian, Teny, WCC
SUSC	Harrington, Mary	Lutheran	Uhl, Hans Michael
SUSC	Simcoe, Mary Lou		

COMING EVENTS

5th symposium of SEDOS synod for Europe 1999

12 October

6. Ms Mary Grey, Hampshire, United Kingdom
Specialist in Spirituality, Ecology and Women's Issues

**WOMEN AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION —
RE-DISCOVERING THE HEART OF ECCLESIA**

7. Fr Jean Joncheray, Paris, France
Vice-rector of the Institut Catholique, Paris

**L'EUROPE DE DEMAIN:
TRANSFORMATION DANS LE PAYSAGE RELIGIEUX**

7 December

8. Sr Grazyna Mech, FMM, Lubljana, Slovenia
Expert in youth work in Eastern Europe (University-Parish)

**LA JEUNESSE DANS LES PAYS DE L'EST:
LE DÉFI D'UNE EXPÉRIENCE RELIGIEUSE
DANS UNE SITUATION NOUVELLE**

9. Dr Gerhard Kruij, Germany
Catholic Academy for Youth, Germany

**YOUTH AND CHRISTIAN FAITH IN WESTERN EUROPE —
CRISIS, HOPES AND THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH**